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ABSTRACT

This guide was developed in Great Britain to help colleges develop programs for assessment of prior learning (APL) for adult students. (APL involves careers and educational guidance, access to particular courses despite possible lack of traditional certification, accreditation, formal credit toward a particular qualification, and exemption from course requirements.) The guide is organized in five sections. The first section defines APL and gives some examples of APL in practice. Sections 2 and 3 describe the decisions required of senior and middle managers responsible for strategic planning and resource management. Action planning, use of staff time, and determining cost effectiveness are discussed. Sections 4 and 5 provide guidance to managers of program teams and the teams involved in staff and curriculum development. Issues involved include curriculum requirements, practices in other institutions, off-site evaluation programs, staff development for all staff, and creating networking arrangements with other colleges and employers. Appendixes, about one-third of the document, include graphs showing APL and efficiency gain, a college audit questionnaire, information on APL and student services, a flowchart for student information and student services in APL, a chart of stages in the APL process, and a summary of the process in accrediting prior learning. A bibliography lists 31 references. (KC)

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THE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING AND LEARNER SERVICES

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THE PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Integrating APL into mainstream learner services will involve many people at different levels in the college. This report attempts to guide and co-ordinate the work of all staff with key roles in this process. It adopts the view that these staff are all managers of APL development and delivery, with responsibility for preparing, planning, implementation and control.

This sequence of responsibilities is the framework for and link between sections of the report which are aimed at particular staff. As a rough guide Sections 2 and 3 aim to support the decisions required of senior and middle managers responsible for Strategic Planning and Resource Management. Sections Four and Five provide guidance to managers of and programme teams involved in staff and curriculum development.

An Executive Summary is provided on pages 7 - 10.

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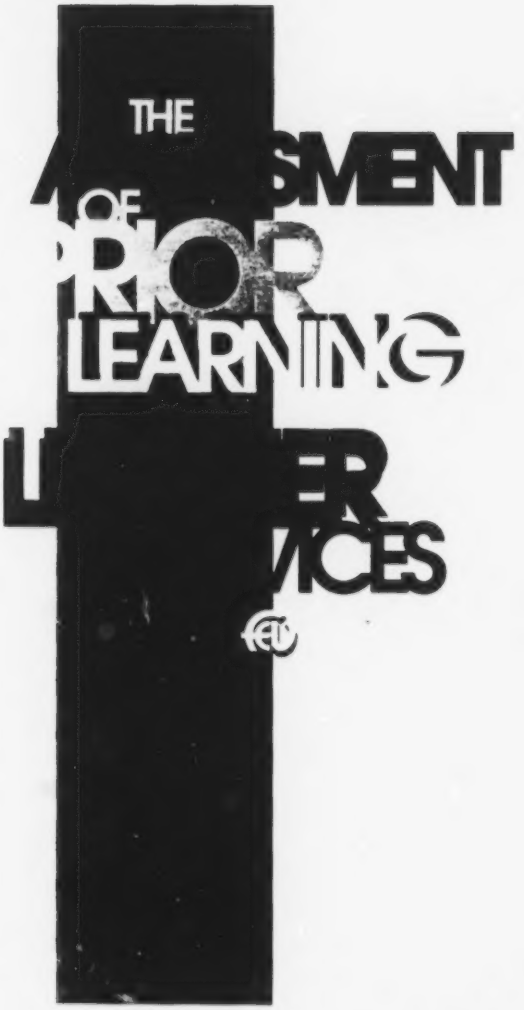
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GLOSSARY

AB	Awarding body
ALR	Achievement-led resourcing
APL	Assessment (and sometimes, but not here, the accreditation) of prior learning
APT&C	Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical Grades
ATC	Accredited training centre
BTEC	Business and Technician Education Council
C&G	City & Guilds of London Institute
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CBQ	Competence-based qualification
CDS	College development services
CET	Continuing education and training
CFM	Customer focus manager
CMS	Certificate of Management Studies
CPVE	Certificate of pre-vocational education
ERA	Education Reform Act (1988)
FE	Further education
GSA	Guidance supported admissions
HTB	Hairdressing Training Board
LEA	Local education authority
LEN	Local employer network
LRW	Learning recognition workshop
MCI	Management Charter Initiative
NATFHE	National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
NCC	National Curriculum Council
NROVA	National Record of Vocational Achievements
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PCFC	Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council
PICKUP	Professional, Industrial and Commercial Updating
RCB	Regional curriculum base
SSR	Staff student ratio
TAPs	Training access points
TDLB	Training and development lead body
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
TEED	Training Enterprise and Education Directorate of the Department of Employment (formerly the Manpower Services Commission and then the Training Agency)
TVE	Technical and vocational education
VQ	Vocational Qualification
WRFE	Work-related further education

As is now widely acknowledged, the assessment of prior learning (APL) is more than just a technical process. It contains ingredients with major implications for further education institutions and curricula.

Amongst other things, APL if fully adopted implies:

- easier access for adults and others;
- a proper recognition and acknowledgement of adult experience;
- exemption from parts of programmes of study where competence has already been acquired;
- a full engagement of learners in the design of learning programmes.

Many parallel developments in further education are favourable to APL. For example:

- the unitary design of NVQs;
- the movement towards learner-centredness;
- the movement towards flexible access and services;
- the increasing demand from adults for education and training;
- the encouragement for open access to assessment.

All these developments make heavy demands on colleges. Flexible access implies flexible delivery of the curriculum, which imposes severe logistical pressure on staff and institutions. Open access to assessment demands new skills and may downgrade the role of institutions if they do not adapt. Flexible access itself, including individual diagnosis, assessment and action planning demands a re-orientation of staff skills and may entail rebuilding colleges and restructuring organisations. In short, APL can entail a comprehensive change in all the processes which comprise the college, whether teaching, learning, counselling, or the financial, personnel and management systems which hold the institutions together.

It is worth noting that those institutions which have been most successful in introducing APL are those which are in any case changing the whole way in which they work, and removing barriers and constraints on individual achievement. APL requires much more accessible and flexible institutions, able to offer a client service whether or not the client is willing to fit in with traditional assumptions about how and when learning can take place. This report aims to help all those who wish to use APL as a means to offer a client-focused service, and need to know ways of making traditional structures more flexible.

FEU is grateful to the project researcher and the author of this report Corinne Henebery, who was employed by the Learning from Experience Trust under its Director, Norman Evans to whom FEU is also grateful. The Unit would also like to thank the colleges involved (named here as A, B and C) which, through their vigorous participation, significantly altered the project's emphases. The guidance that is offered, particularly on staff and institutional development, should reflect very accurately the requirements of the FE system.

Current legislation will demand flexibility from all colleges. Other FEU publications have explored other aspects of flexibility including admissions, learner services and the delivery of the curriculum. The Department of Employment is supporting and promoting access to assessment. Legislation demands it, but it is also in the interests of learners, potential learners and the economy that effective measures are introduced to offer education and training to all who will benefit from them and therefore to provide maximum benefit to society, industry and the economy. APL and associated developments can help colleges to achieve this.

Martin C. Johnson
Principal Officer
Further Education Unit

The assessment of prior learning (APL) can play a key role in institutional development as both a catalyst and tool for:

- improving flexibility and access in learner services;
- raising the institution profile and therefore contributing to its marketing.

This section summarises the action needed for APL to fulfil this potential and highlights issues raised elsewhere in the report.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

1. College managers must be clear about why they want or need to add APL to existing provision. They need to:
   - analyse the benefits of APL to individuals, employers **and** their institutions;
   - devise a phased implementation strategy which suits their particular priorities and constraints.
2. Implementing APL services requires flexibility in all aspects of a college's operations. Senior managers of marketing, finance administration and buildings as well as of curriculum and staff development should therefore **all** be involved in strategic planning for APL.
3. Colleges need to adopt a progressive APL action plan which builds on existing flexibility in guidance assessment and learning arrangements.
4. Action plans should take full account of the **resourcing (especially staffing) implications of APL** including top-up learning, where APL is geared to accreditation.
5. Successful implementation requires the location of pilot development in departments/sections/teams likely to produce high quality exemplars fairly quickly.
6. The management of a college-wide action plan requires staff with cross-college roles to **direct** the activities of project teams and working groups.
7. Cross-college and other staff with APL development responsibilities must have the practical support of **senior and middle** managers as well as formal links with mainstream decision-making procedures.
8. Flexible control mechanisms are needed to stimulate APL/ learner services development combining clear individual accountabilities and the use of suitable performance indicators as targets.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

1. It is the responsibility of strategic managers to create the staffing and flexibility needed to deliver APL from within current levels of resourcing supplemented by income generation.
2. College managers must find the staff time needed to perform the tasks that APL involves. Initial screening should be provided as an extension of existing information and guidance services. Assessment time can only come from the overall staff time resource available to a department or section. It can be released by:
   - reducing teaching input hours on full-time courses;
   - establishing assessment and learning centres with staff relating to customers for their full contractual hours;

- making appointments, where appropriate, in non-academic scales.

3. At the moment managers can only 'cost' APL on an 'opportunity-costing' basis. They therefore need to develop:
   - 'accounting procedures' to produce a case-load system for APL staff;
   - monitoring procedures to evaluate the costs and cost effectiveness of APL.
4. Managers need to develop a consistent college-wide approach to charging for APL delivered to individual and corporate customers. Colleges are currently experimenting with different models depending on local conditions and their wish or need to be competitive in the market place.
5. Achievement-led resourcing (ALR) offers the way forward for costing and pricing APL and other learner services. The feasibility of ALR which relates resources to promoting achievement rather than to numbers of learners has been established. Strategic managers developing APL should keep abreast of work in progress to refine and pilot this system of resource allocation.

STAFF AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

1. The curricular prerequisites of APL to enhance access to qualifications are:
   - modular/unit-based curriculum design;
   - flexible access to modular/unit-based assessment and learning services.
2. Staff need to develop their own models of APL to suit the purpose of the process, drawing on:
   - proven practice in other institutions;
   - relevant awarding body (AB) guidelines;
   - the expertise of generalists and specialists as appropriate.
3. The issue of the role of generalists and specialists in delivering APL for accreditation is open to debate. The experience of this project suggests a role for generalists in providing marketing, information, initial guidance and screening services, but that detailed guidance about suitable evidence as well as assessment should be provided by specialists with relevant subject-based knowledge and expertise.
4. The term 'assessment of current competence' may be more appropriate than APL where credit is sought towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Experience and awarding body requirements suggest that using evidence of competence claims from standard/current assessments is often more cost effective and convenient than preparing a portfolio of evidence from the past.
5. Plans for APL procedures should aim to reduce staffing costs where this does not threaten standards, for example, by:
   - the use of expert systems to assist review and identification of achievements relevant to particular NVQs/VQs;
   - designing take-away guidance packs including self-assessment materials;
   - devising group-based guidance and assessment procedures where possible;

- off-site provision geared to the needs of large companies wanting APL;
- as a stand-alone accreditation service or to assist training needs analysis.

6. Staff development must be provided for **all staff** involved in implementing APL. Development programmes targeted specifically at managers, tutors, administrative and support staff should also encourage collaboration between them.
7. Staff need time and support to adjust to new roles and new ways of working as well as to develop the skills and procedures needed for APL. This is best provided by team-based development over a realistic time frame.
8. Staff with designated APL leadership roles need to:
   - direct and integrate as well as support different strands of development;
   - help staff at all levels deal with resistance to change.
9. Management development is crucial to embedding APL within mainstream provision. Managers need **training** and support to:
   - plan, resource and support the delivery of APL and other flexible learner services;
   - manage change effectively.
10. The commitment and achievements of staff involved in APL implementation should be:
    - properly recognised;
    - well documented and publicised to stimulate development elsewhere in the college;
    - accredited.
11. Staff development managers should seek to make suitable accreditation available as a matter of priority. Staff involved in APL and assessment for NVQs need access to the new qualifications for assessors and verifiers based on the national Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) standards.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND APL

1. Colleges need to develop:
   - networking arrangements with other colleges at similar stages in APL development to stimulate progress towards implementation;
   - working links between staff from different institutions with similar responsibilities;
   - consortia approaches to APL delivery involving formal co-operation between institutions to provide access to advice, guidance and assessment services across a spread of NVQs/VQs.
   - collaborative and contractual arrangements with Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and other agencies for example to pump-prime APL development and develop comprehensive advice and guidance services;
   - stronger marketing and income-generating links with employers.

AWARDING BODIES AND APL

1. National awarding bodies need to:
   - increase the level of investment in training for educators to ensure consistent standards of verification;
   - standardise their assessment/APL requirements particularly those applicable to NVQs;
   - review the extent to which they are inhibiting APL development in the field by for example, the over emphasis on written assessments for some competence-based awards such as City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and the lower status of certification achieved by credit accumulation with the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC).
2. The main awarding bodies have produced useful guidelines for APL. However the restrictions of some of their registration, assessment and verification requirements can tend to limit the scope of APL for accreditation even where it is theoretically possible.
3. The format of some awards including a number of conditional NVQs which lack an obvious competence base and unit structure continue to pose technical problems in the APL process.

WHAT IS APL?

APL, the process of assessing prior learning, is based on the relatively obvious notion that what and how people learn and have learned should be recognised and used to help them progress as learners. Since the early 1980s this idea has been developed through various APL procedures, mainly to help adults seeking:

i) **careers and educational guidance;**

ii) **access** to a particular course, despite possibly lacking traditional certification;

iii) **accreditation/formal credit** towards a particular qualification;

iv) **exemption** from course requirements allowed by some awarding bodies.

It is these different purposes which determine the focus and detailed procedures of what is basically the same assessment process (see Figure 1, APL and its different purposes p.12). Exemption is included to take account of the regulations of some awarding bodies. It is in a different category from guidance, access and accreditation which focus primarily on the learning achievements and needs of individuals.

APL IN PRACTICE

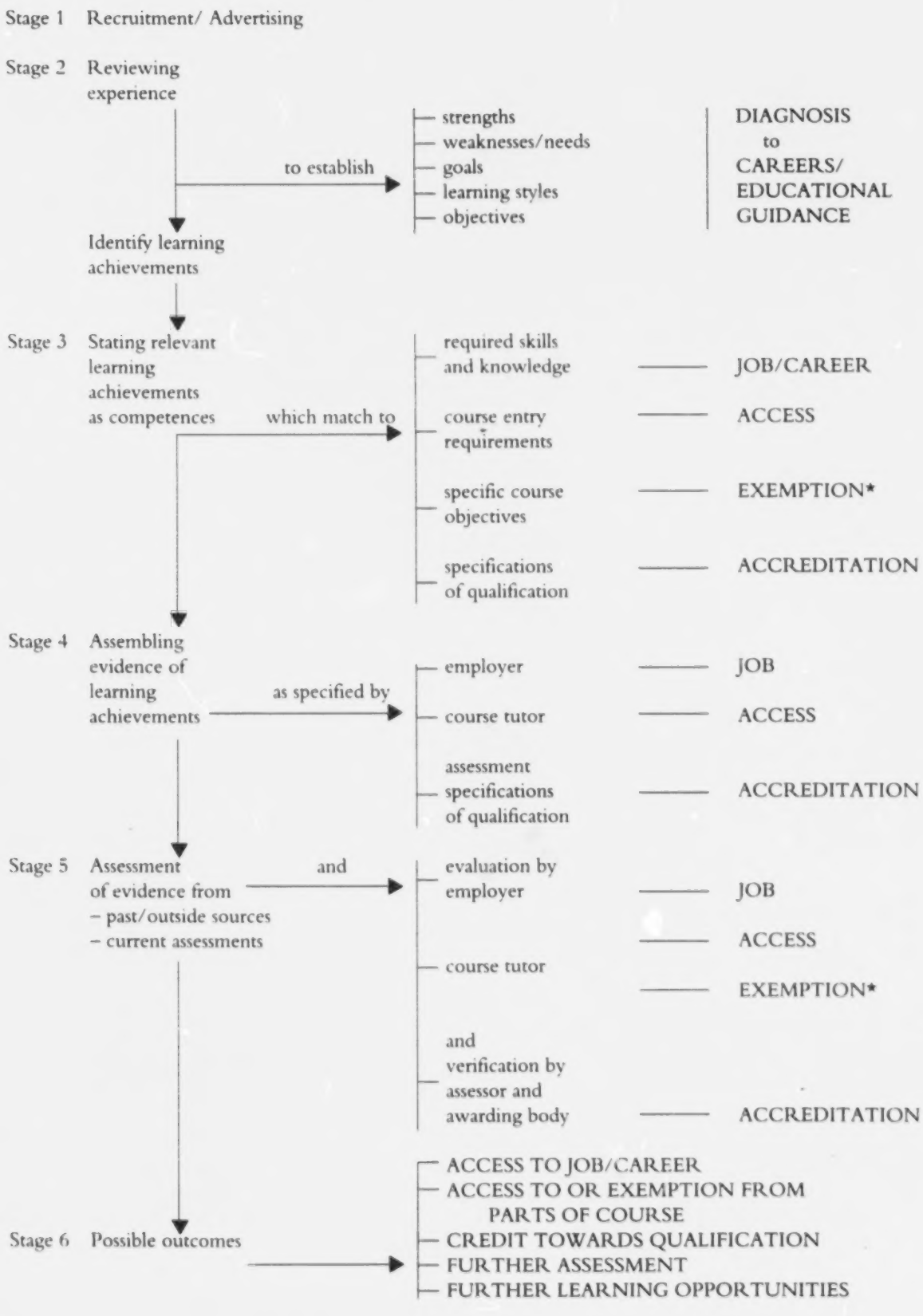
Assessment and some forms of accreditation for prior achievements may be offered whether or not the candidate is seeking formal certification. In practice, there are usually two kinds of service:

- a service which enables adult returners to reflect on their prior learning achievements, primarily to recognise them as valuable as well as to assist motivation, educational access and careers guidance;
- a service which concentrates on enabling people to identify their prior learning achievements and relate them to the assessment requirements of a particular vocational qualification in order to claim credit, e.g. for so many NVQ units.

Both processes involve reflecting on experience, identifying learning achievements and assembling evidence, for example in a personal portfolio. There is a divergence however where the requirements of a vocational qualification are to be met and therefore when assessment has to be sufficiently rigorous to satisfy the awarding body concerned. Where credit towards a formal qualification is sought, great care must be taken to relate prior learning achievements to precise assessment specifications such as those in NVQs. This process is greatly assisted where an NVQ with statements of competence is used. In addition each awarding body has its own APL regulations primarily to ensure that credit awarded by this means is no less authentic than that obtained using more conventional assessment. Clearly, awarding body regulations must be adhered to and considered in planning to deliver APL for possible accreditation.

The flexible assessment services offered to the potential APL customer must allow for evidence of achievement to be presented from past or current assessments of performance and knowledge. Once credit is awarded it is indistinguishable from credit awarded by any other means.

1. APL FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES



* applies only when allowed by some awarding bodies

APL IN CONTEXT

The general usefulness, as well as the success or failure, of all educational initiatives is related to the educational context in which they are set up. This is particularly true of the assessment of prior learning. During the 1980s, as adults became increasingly important clients in further and higher education, APL gained its reputation as a valuable component of non-standard provision for adult returners. It proved most successful where used for guidance, access and exemption. Until recently, APL has remained marginal to the mainstream further education (FE) curriculum; its benefits made available mainly to adult learners on for example, Access, Return to Learning and Foundation courses. Its potential as a multi-purpose assessment service has also been limited by the technical difficulties of using it for formal credit towards the traditional qualifications offered in further education.

The advent of NVQs however, makes APL for accreditation a more straightforward proposition within flexible mainstream assessment.

The need to deliver NVQs and requirements arising from new legislation are putting pressure on FE colleges to become more learner centred. The time is right for colleges to develop APL but for it to be really useful both to institutions as suppliers and to learners as users, APL needs to be part of a range of customer-centred admissions, assessment and **learner services**. Before a sound APL service can be offered, extensive staff, curriculum and institutional development must therefore have occurred or be underway. For this reason staff responsible for managing almost every aspect of a college's operations will need to know:

- what value APL has for the students/clients they are hoping to attract;
- whether it is a worthwhile investment, given their particular working circumstances and institutional priorities.

They can however be confident that APL is both:

- sound educational practice which meshes with other learner-centred initiatives;
- a powerful tool in achieving the broad structural changes required of post-16 education and training providers in the future.

USING APL TO MEET THE CHALLENGES FOR POST-16 INSTITUTIONS

After considerable neglect, post-16 institutions including FE colleges are in the national spotlight. There is a widely acknowledged national need to raise levels of post-school achievement and develop a more qualified society. Levels of training and achievement in this country compare unfavourably with those of our international competitors. The value of post-school education and training, and lifelong learning is now generally recognised. Education is coming to be seen as a national resource through which both national prosperity and enhanced life-chances for individuals may be secured.

In a general sense, APL contributes to both these ambitions. Firstly, it is an encouragement to people of all ages to return to education/ training because they will receive recognition for what they have already achieved. Secondly, it provides a cost-effective way to enable people to progress because time and money will not be wasted to

make them relearn what they have already learned. APL is therefore linked to encouraging and motivating adult returners to colleges and to making more cost-effective provision to meet their needs.

These considerations lead to a key feature of the present post-16 context which APL addresses directly: the need for colleges to be competitive. Competition has been explicitly encouraged as an aid to raising quality in successive legislation. FE colleges compete with sixth form colleges and with schools, for students. They compete with each other for employers' business, and for contracts with TECs and other bodies with funds to pay for education and training. Providing an APL service will give an institution a competitive edge at least in the adult market.

The general need to be entrepreneurial and adopt serious marketing strategies, and to become effective and efficient, is re-enforced in legislation. The Education Reform Act (ERA), 1988 gave FE colleges delegated powers of management including budget control, programme delivery, and most personnel matters in order to promote a more market-oriented, cost-effective style of operation. The Act also required careful performance monitoring and review and reporting of results. All this makes it necessary for colleges to address the needs of their customers directly, to spend resources wisely and earn as much income as possible. APL helps to meet all these requirements. It offers the opportunity to provide a new service linked to flexible assessment, accreditation and learning arrangements (see Figure 2, APL and Learner Services p.15). It is marketable to a wide range of potential customers*, particularly employers. Some colleges have made it the leading edge of their marketing strategy and have been rewarded with increased business on a full-cost basis.

If the Secretary of State's current proposals to create an independent post-16 sector are realised, with colleges directly funded by an FE Council, this process will have been taken to its logical conclusion. Colleges, like those in the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) sector, will prosper according to their ability to satisfy their customers in a high quality cost-effective way. Therefore they will need to generate income and trade in an education and training market. A clear commitment to APL will be not simply desirable, but the key to attracting whole groups of learners who will only undertake standard courses or learning programmes when they have been credited for their prior achievements.

The concept of the 'training market', coined by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) sums up an important part of the new context for post-secondary education. As in any market, the successful service provider does not simply keep up, but keeps ahead. The winners are those who provide high quality services, focused on needs, in a cost-effective manner.

In developing learner-centred services colleges will need to:

- be as **cost-effective** as possible so that they achieve competitive unit costs: this means ensuring that as much achievement as possible per individual is secured for each unit of resource allocated;

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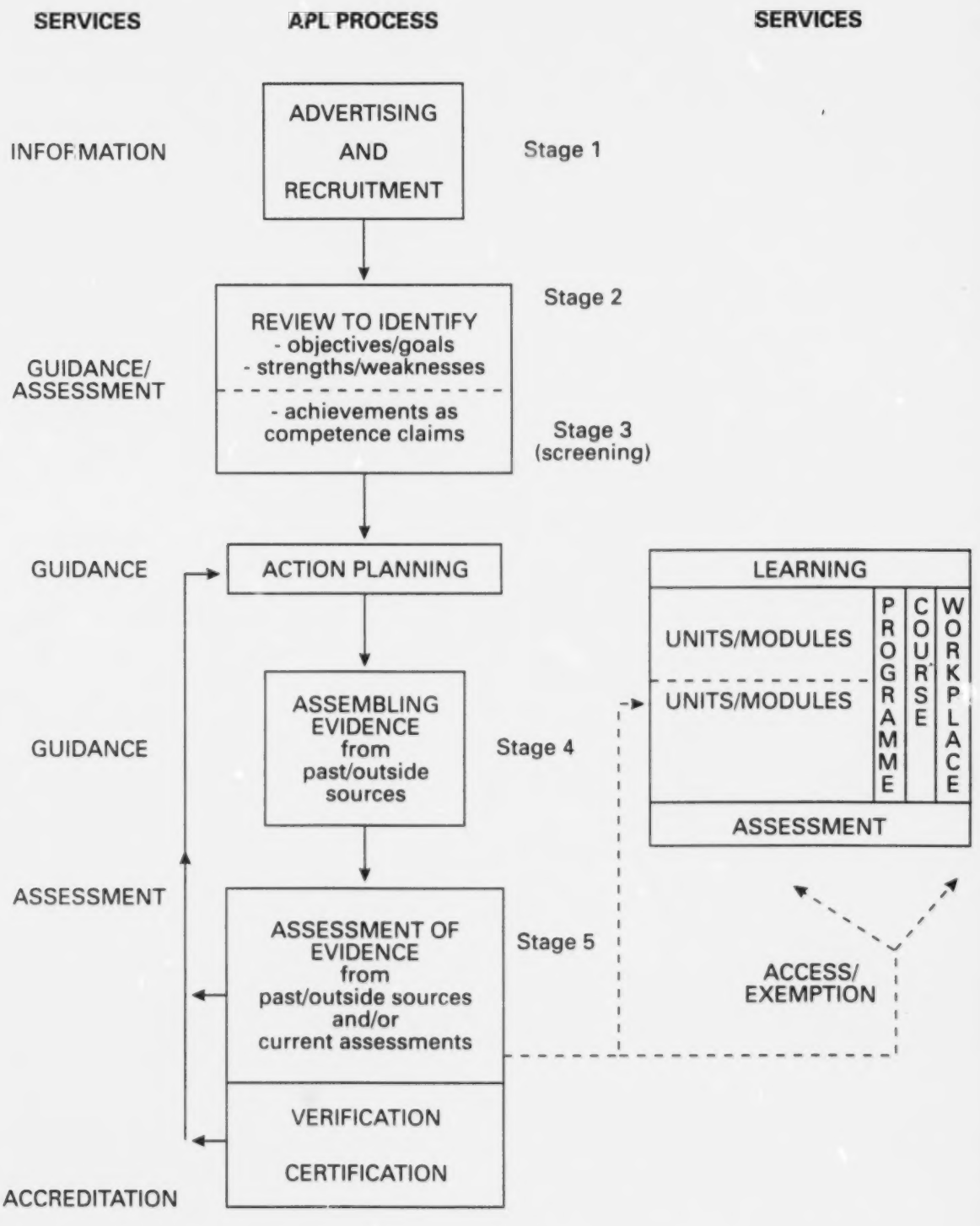
* *Open Access to Assessment* NCVQ R&D Report No.4 identifies a series of possible client groups seeking APL to meet a spectrum of needs.

2. APL AND LEARNER SERVICES



***Adapted by the author from* NVQs and Prior Learning (*NVCQ, 1991*)**

- be **flexible** by providing open access to learning, and assessment as far as possible, including at times and in locations well beyond traditional college practice;
- demonstrate **high quality** to secure client confidence: this means using recognised qualifications including NVQs where appropriate to accredit achievement, and quality assuring the whole process;
- **forge links with business and the TECs** as part of a 'preferred supplier' strategy so that they can generate stability in funding and provision.

APL is not an added 'extra' to the traditional college curriculum. It forms part of an integrated strategy to make appropriate provision. It is a tool for college managers to use for the continued viability and attractiveness of their institutions.

COST EFFECTIVENESS

The cost effectiveness of APL lies in enhancing access to and accelerating progress towards qualifications through diagnosis and appropriate guidance. It enables people to use and/or be credited for their achievements and move on to what they need to learn. It is part of a process of valuing each individual and devising an individual learning and assessment programme to suit their needs. Its cost effectiveness will not be realised unless arrangements are in place to offer formal credit, immediately after assessment, separate from enrolment on a course. APL candidates will not wish to wait while students on a particular course catch up before they receive credit: there must be open access to assessment and top-up facilities to complete NVQs and accreditation. Similarly, candidates may wish to proceed to new learning **immediately,** which requires modular or unit-based provision. The challenge for colleges is to find ways to offer **both** traditional courses **and** access to units or modules of learning as required. Without this, the appeal and the cost effectiveness of APL will be lost.

FLEXIBILITY

APL is also part of achieving flexibility generally. It makes educational sense for learners to receive assessment **first,** before they start learning, to inform what they need to learn. APL can provide a profile of an individual's achievements even where formal accreditation does not take place. This can be used to provide access to, exemption from or guidance about an appropriate course or programme. It also focuses attention on those units or modules of learning which are needed for a particular qualification. It follows that individuals will benefit from maximum flexibility in how they continue their learning through programmes of short courses, modules, and open learning of all kinds. Without APL, college and learning managers are deprived of a tool to enable learners to get onto the right course or start suitable individual programmes.

HIGH QUALITY

APL is also part of achieving high quality – not only in assessment, but in all the learner services a college provides. APL represents quality in the treatment learners receive. No individual or employer will expect to be faced with a situation where achievements go unrecognised and unused. Individuals will expect APL as part of pre-entry guidance. Employers will expect it to help identify training needs and as part of planning programmes to meet them. FE's 'customers' will expect to receive or progress towards qualifications as quickly as their

achievements allow. TECs are increasingly moving to 'output-related funding' whereby fees are linked to learning achievements. Hence time wasted in unproductive 'relearning' will not be supported.

LINKS WITH INDUSTRY

Most colleges have always placed emphasis on good links with local business and industry. However until April 1990, LEAs (April 1991 for London Boroughs) were responsible for college budgets, and even where relationships were not good or particular work diminished through technological change, there were sometimes no direct budget implications. Both under ERA and in the new independent sector, colleges will suffer directly if they cannot maintain their 'market niches'. They must forge durable links with employers, and involve them and the TECs in strategic planning and subsequent review. It is clear that employers, once cognisant of its efficiency, will want APL as a permanent service. They will **expect** employees and potential adult employees, to be offered assessment of prior learning and particularly credit for relevant achievements. Colleges which do not respond will lose business. APL is already becoming as important a learner service as tutoring and guidance.

APL AS THE FOCUS FOR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

College managers need to see APL not as just another initiative to be weighed in the balance with all the others, but as a focal point for institutional services development into the next century. It must be considered as part of these developments, not in isolation from them. As will emerge in this report, APL raises issues of course/programme structure and delivery, of staff development and deployment, and of costing and pricing. These are issues for the college of the future: APL simply highlights them. No report on APL can fully address all these issues but for colleges which need to address them to become more learner-centred, APL is not one of the problems - it is a major part of the solution.

THE PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Integrating APL into mainstream learner services will involve many people at different levels in the college. This report attempts to guide and co-ordinate the work of all staff with key roles in this process. It adopts the view that these staff are all managers of APL development and delivery, with responsibility for preparing, planning, implementation and control.

This sequence of responsibilities is the framework for and link between sections of the report which are aimed at particular staff. As a rough guide Sections 2 and 3 aim to support the decisions required of senior and middle managers responsible for Strategic Planning and Resource Management. Sections Four and Five provide guidance to managers of and programme teams involved in staff and curriculum development.

An Executive Summary is provided on pages 7 - 10.

SECTION 2 STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR APL WITHIN LEARNER SERVICES

The integration of APL within mainstream college provision requires leadership from senior and middle managers who are committed to it as a key part of developing learner services. This leadership is unlikely to be forthcoming unless strategic and operational managers have:

- decided where APL fits into corporate and departmental development plans;
- formulated a long term APL strategy;
- devised realistic action plans for its implementation.

This section concentrates on this process of strategic planning, recognising that it must be supported by complementary resource management, the topic of Section 3. Both sections are aimed at senior and middle managers with analysis, planning, implementation and control responsibilities.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR APL

Strategic planning involves various internal developments which support the way in which the college sees itself developing. In terms of APL these involve greater accessibility and flexibility in provision so that more people can benefit without having to overcome unnecessary barriers and constraints. It is important to locate such internal changes in how the college seeks to position itself in its external environment. Internal changes are driven by such factors as:

- unmet demands from individuals, employers, the community;
- clear evidence that traditional patterns of attendance and learning are an unwelcome constraint, and conversely that people wish to learn in unconventional ways and receive new learner services such as APL;
- desire to 'capture' a particular market segment, e.g. people in work or in a particular industry where there is as yet unrealised or unmet need;
- desire to increase numbers and/or generally change the image of the college in its community.

The task of senior managers is to assimilate these external factors, and translate them into internal change. Hitherto such change has been on the margin of a college's main activities which have generally been expected to remain fairly constant year on year. It is now rapidly becoming apparent that no organisation, especially not an educational one, can expect to survive without **constant** strategic development. For this reason managers must be trained in strategic thinking as a way of life, not just something to be done when a course fails to recruit or some other sign of poor market positioning is apparent. APL is not a one-off service to bolt on to a college's portfolio, but a key tool for strategic thinking which should become key to all college management.

PREPARING

1. Devising an APL Strategy

Because APL assumes or creates the need for flexibility in a range of learner services it requires a phased implementation strategy. College managers need first to decide why they want or need to add APL to their existing provision and then to select a preferred

strategy from their available options. Prompt lists to support this sort of analysis and decision making are provided in Section 3.

Evidence suggests that the key to embedding APL is a strategy which is integral to long-term corporate (and departmental) development plans.

Between 1989–92 APL has been integral to the customer-centred corporate development plan of College A. This plan has been informed and supported by a comparable LEA strategy for post-16 education and training services. Both college and LEA strategies provide APL arrangements to enhance the flexibility of assessment guidance and programme planning services.

College B plans to refine informal APL facilities available in central admissions arrangements. APL is seen as an extension of flexible access and learning provision developed to meet the needs of a high proportion of part-time students.

College C intended to embed learner-centred guidance and assessment including APL as part of its long-term commitment to developing its then mission statement Quality Education for All. One of three complementary policies for institutional development between 1989–92 emphasises the need to integrate the principles of APL and customised learning throughout the college.

2. **Staffing arrangements to support APL development**
The scope of a college's APL strategy obviously determines the nature of permanent and temporary arrangements needed to support its implementation.

The management of a **college-wide APL strategy** almost inevitably **requires** staff with senior/middle management status and **cross-college roles** related for example to assessment, guidance, progression, flexible learning and customer services.

At College A, the status of customer services development is recognised by the existence of a **College Development Services (CDS) Faculty**. The **Customer Focus Manager (CFM)** with overall responsibility for implementing APL across the college is deputy head of faculty. Her role is linked to those of other senior staff with cross-college responsibilities including: curriculum support and development, marketing and research, information and communications.

Due to severe resource limitations at College B, APL development has been managed by the Director of Open Learning who also has overall responsibility for community education links.

At College C policy statements in Quality Education for All were not translated into corporate development plans during the lifetime of the project although four senior cross-college posts were planned, namely a Flexible Learning Co-ordinator and three Directors of Marketing, Guidance and Progression, and Assessment. Three of these posts were filled but the appointment of a Director of Guidance and Progression to complement the role of the existing Director of Assessment was postponed. This and other unforeseen constraints including resource limitations created the need for a less ambitious APL strategy.

There is substantial evidence that change agents including cross-college staff are able to work more effectively across departmental and sectional boundaries when provided with:

- support from strategic managers and staff with similar responsibilities;
- realistic job descriptions and systems to prioritise their work loads.

Section 4 includes examples of how far cross-college staff from the participating colleges were effective in:

- directing the development activities of cross-college and other working groups;
- helping to develop common approaches to APL deliveries;
- contributing to co-ordinated staff, curriculum and institutional services development.

A less ambitious APL strategy, to offer APL in certain curriculum areas for example, does not require permanent restructuring. Temporary arrangements can be made to provide remission for **APL teams** to develop relevant procedures **at faculty/ departmental or course team level.** Examples of this sort of development work are provided in Sections 4 and 5. Ways to create the staffing flexibility necessary to deliver APL within mainstream provision are described in Section 3.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Action plans**

The effective implementation of any strategy is more likely where action plans:

- are formulated by consultation between senior and middle managers;
- are precisely defined;
- involve incremental changes to existing practice;
- take full account of operational and resourcing needs;
- anticipate and include tactics to deal with staff resistance to change.

The successful implementation of APL requires plans which, if possible, combine all these features. Even if offered on a limited scale, APL requires organic rather than linear changes to numerous aspects of a college's operations. Plans therefore need to cater for development on several fronts simultaneously.

As described below Colleges A, B and C devised action plans which were feasible given their particular starting points, priorities and resource constraints. Details of implementation are provided in Sections 4 and 5.

College A produced a low risk action plan appropriate for a complex, hierarchical and cautious institution. APL development work was concentrated in one faculty in relation to two different curriculum areas, Management and Catering. Various factors complicated the original plan and extended the time scale needed for its implementation. These included:

- structural re-organisation in the college which included splitting the above faculty into two separate schools with staff changes at both senior and operational management levels;
- resistance to change from some key staff.

Nonetheless a modified version of the original action plans proved successful in:

- producing workable APL procedures and models of staff and curriculum development applicable elsewhere in the organisation;
- identifying which stages of the APL process could feasibly be delivered within recently established central customer services;
- prompting an impressive range of similar development work in other areas of the college.

At College C the plan was amended as the college had to go through some restructuring of the staff and changes of management. At the same time budget revisions meant that certain plans which were dependent upon capital expenditure were altered and modified. The effects of these various factors included:

- the abandonment of plans to appoint certain cross-college staff;
- the indefinite postponement of plans to establish two college admissions centres.

Implementation effectively assisted:

- the production of a strategy for guidance supported admissions by the Director of Assessment;
- the development of enhanced learner services including APL in several curriculum areas.

However as a framework for integration spanning a number of departmental interests, the action plan proved over ambitious in the absence of a college-wide strategy for learner services development.

2. **Implementation tactics**

Experience suggests that tactics to assist the successful implementation of APL action plans include:

- tight management of externally funded development projects supported when possible by additional resourcing from a central college development fund;
- locating pilot development work in departments, sections or teams likely to produce high quality examplars fairly quickly;
- developing new marketing strategies and partnerships including stronger income-generating links with employers and collaborative arrangements with TECs, for example for pump-priming purposes.

Practical examples of marketing and partnership initiatives are provided in Sections 4 and 5.

In this context managers must reconcile the need to build on relevant expertise with the possibility of overloading and de-motivating enthusiastic and committed staff.

Customer services development at College A has been supported by the collaborative college-LEA relationship based on a shared commitment to access and flexibility. This has enabled the college to support APL development in this project with complementary projects related to 'achievement-led resourcing' (ALR) and the implementation of competence-based qualifications.

Core LEA funding also provided the physical facilities needed to establish a Customer Services Unit on the ground floor of the main site of the College. This unit represents borough-wide co-operation between the College, Adult Education Service, and Careers and Training Service to provide:

- information including connection to training access points (TAPS) as well as face-to-face interviews;
- guidance about all aspects of education, training and careers including advice on available learning support and access/ progression opportunities.

Suitable rooms are also available for APL screening, interviews and group work. Arrangements are in place to link central services with dispersed APL provision in particular curriculum areas, notably catering, retailing, hairdressing and technology. Potential APL customers are referred by non-academic staff to members of the APL Support and Design Group or direct to the departments concerned. Plans to refine these arrangements include the forthcoming appointment of an APL (Office) Manager to provide initial screening and advice within central services.

CONTROL AND MONITORING

Of all the standard strategic management techniques those most needed to **direct** APL implementation are perhaps:

- building clear targets and milestones into corporate and/or APL strategic plans and allocating detailed responsibilities for their achievement;
- taking action to address deviations from targets or adjusting them if corrective action is impossible or inappropriate;
- anticipating and dealing with opposition to APL which is often rooted in self-interest as well as concern about standards.

ENHANCING LEARNER SERVICES DEVELOPMENT

Even if successful APL procedures are developed these are unlikely to have any long term impact on mainstream curriculum practice unless strategic managers **act** to co-ordinate staff, curriculum and institutional development. Tactics which have proved effective in the participating colleges include those described below.

1) **Formalising links between development activities and mainstream college operations.**

At College A the faculty status of College Development Services (CDS) ensures that its senior staff contribute to mainstream strategic and operational management decisions. Working links have also been established between CDS and staff responsible for finance, administration and buildings which have helped to:

- ease some of the tensions related to establishing central services;
- devise systems of costing and pricing for APL;
- introduce flexible enrolment and fee procedures;
- implement the FEU/LEA Achievement-Led Resourcing Project.

In contrast, at College C the GSA Strategy Group had no formal ties with mainstream decision-making processes. It therefore functioned more as a think tank than as an agency for change.

2) **Providing change agents with authority as well as expert power.**

Cross-college staff at both Colleges B and C have recognised advisory functions but no direct authority to influence mainstream college operations, particularly those related to staffing, capital investment, etc. Staff appointed as APL Co-ordinators at middle/

senior management levels in both of the colleges have experienced similar isolation and frustration.

3) **Using central mechanisms to stimulate development**.

Flexible central mechanisms are needed to stimulate and evaluate progress towards embedding APL and learner services. These mechanisms could usefully combine:

- top-slicing the institutional budget to create resources for central services;
- a centrally directed development strategy utilising the above and involving appropriate quality indicators as standards against which to approve bids from departments and evaluate progress towards delivering learner services.

In short, what colleges need is a system to synchronise resource management and strategic planning to **direct** institutional services development.

SECTION 3 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT TO DELIVER APL

INTRODUCTION:

APL may be considered a new service which a college wishes to provide for its customers. On one level, it is no different from any other in that it will require resources including staff time and overheads, the costs of which may be passed on wholly or in part to the customer. However it is especially important to be clear how much and what kind of resources are involved.

Also, resource management in colleges is mostly related to the traditional product - a course of some kind. For this reason deployment of resources, as well as costing them, may be not be straightforward.

This section approaches these issues from the points of view of two crucial levels in the college:

- strategic or senior managers;
- operations or middle managers.

It provides guidance to support decisions related to resource management responsibilities involving:

a) preparing/analysis, e.g. to select a preferred APL strategy;

b) planning and implementation, e.g. to create necessary staffing flexibility;

c) control and monitoring, e.g. to monitor the costs and benefits of APL.

STRATEGIC MANAGERS

PREPARING

1. Strategic managers first need to decide whether APL is a useful addition to the services offered by their institution. They therefore need to consider whether they wish or need to:
   - attract and meet the needs of those adult learners who may have a range of prior learning;
   - motivate adult learners by offering them recognition of prior learning and achievement to accelerate their completion of desired qualifications;
   - satisfy local employers' needs to exploit the full potential of their employees by offering assessment of prior learning achievements for formal credit towards qualifications;
   - contract with TECs or other bodies who wish to purchase APL services for adults;
   - establish or develop a market niche for APL to gain or improve their market share;
   - establish the college as a centre for open access to assessment, with all that follows for flexible learning.
2. Assuming APL does have a useful role within corporate development plans, managers need to analyse their strategic options by considering the following questions:
   - whether to go for **all** vocational/curriculum areas, or 'select', and if select then on what basis – market need or state of internal development?

- whether to target a particular group to start with, e.g. those in work whose costs may be met by their employer, PICKUP, etc?
- what are the opportunity costs; what will staff **not** do while they are delivering APL?
- what flexibility is there for bearing development costs, including staff training and development?
- whether they want APL to be a better service to those whose costs are met by the local education authority, under 19s, unemployed adults, **or** a money-making service to those whose costs are met by employers or themselves?
- whether they want APL to become an income-generating service, and if so how soon should it show a surplus over expenditure?
- how long they are prepared to allow APL to be a 'loss-leader' before it at least breaks even?

Answers to these questions will vary enormously.

Perhaps the extremes are:

- colleges like College B for which APL at least in the medium term is seen as one small service, of some benefit to a limited client group, which must make a clear income over expenditure on staff time;
- colleges like College A where APL is part of a much wider strategy to provide a full range of customer services as flexibly as possible, and therefore a natural part of the assessment arrangements for all learners of all ages.

Most colleges will wish to adopt a progressive strategy, starting from what can reasonably be sustained, and pushing forward at a pace which suits the institution.

Possible strategies

A. Offering APL to all students recruited to existing courses and programmes, but not to recruit customers specifically for APL.

Senior Managers must decide the nature and level of APL facilities to be provided by faculties/departments/schools.

Within this general requirement, each department could be allowed to estimate the likely volume of APL and staff it accordingly.

For example, two members of staff could be provided for three hours each per week to work with APL clients. This would be considered 'class-contact' and a notional number of clients per session set as a target.

B. Offering a college-wide APL service with a central reception/screening facility, and assessors working in faculties/departments/schools.

Senior managers must decide the expected/desired volume of APL customers in order to plan level of staffing for reception/screening, and approximate split between departments to advise on staff time needed. A senior member of staff could be made responsible for setting up an APL service, complete with customer referral. Departments could then be asked to make staff available to an estimated level of demand to undertake assessment.

C. Offering limited APL service in certain areas, and with cost recovery in all cases.

Senior Managers must decide how much income to require in relation to expenditure, e.g. simply to cover staff costs, or also to contribute to overheads. Departments selected to offer APL would then be allocated to recruit APL candidates, but to agree a firm 'price' for the service on either a cost-per-hour or package basis.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

At strategic level, planning and setting up APL will depend on the way in which departments are currently resourced. There are three broad models, with many variants.

1. Senior Managers allocate staffing, running expenses, etc. to departments in relation to a given course/programme; decisions about staffing levels are taken centrally; central services are simply built into each department's budget.
2. Senior Managers 'top-slice' the institutional budget for central services, allocating the rest to departments, allowing them a degree of discretion over actual course programmes and resource levels; central services are planned and operated centrally.
3. Senior Managers hold resources and require departments to 'bid' for a given course programme and level of resourcing; central services are treated like a department, except that they are identified as a recharge on departments; departments are given targets, and allowed discretion over how resources are used.

Tactics

It follows that once the **kind** and **extent** of APL are agreed, how it is resourced will depend on how all other activities are resourced.

For example, senior managers could decide that internal resource allocation will 'assume' a larger level of teacher input to full-time courses of 20 hours a week, but resource departments at the former level of 22 hours. Departments may use the difference to make staff available for APL purposes.

Similarly, departments could be encouraged, through policy and targets, to achieve a given level of APL clients/flexibility. Savings in one area, e.g. internal decoration, running expenses could be recycled to pay for more staff time.

Alternatively, some form of 'development fund' could be established by 'top-slicing' through which departments could bid for extra resources to offer APL. These are, of course, only 'extra' to a given department, not to the college as a whole.

Beyond this, there are various ways of making staffing resources more flexible. For example, staff employed wholly on taught courses up to their contractual class contact hours are very inflexible. Staff employed in a learning assessment centre can be employed for their full contractual thirty hours. They can be facilitating learning and dealing with the needs of learners in much larger numbers than in a traditional classroom. Work at College A has established that there is a significant 'efficiency gain' when resources are applied to learning through a learning centre, compared with a traditional course.

Managers of colleges which are above target full-time equivalents (FTEs) need to find ways to create the staffing and accommodation capacity to deliver APL and top-up learning services. College A and

the LEA have recently finalised a **flexible working year agreement** with NATFHE partly for this purpose.

Depending on the level of APL to be provided, senior managers will need to decide how many staff are to be employed delivering guidance assessment and flexible learning, and the range of duties they are to cover.

In some cases, roles hitherto performed by academic staff may more appropriately be carried out by staff on other pay and conditions, e.g Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical Grades (APT & C). A good example is the initial 'screening' process which requires counselling, interpersonal skills and an understanding of APL and particular qualifications. Evidence suggests that there is no good reason why an academic member of staff is needed for this role, with resulting efficiency gain. At College A, for example, there are plans to appoint an APL Manager to provide 'screening' within Central Student Services.

In summary, senior managers may:

- lower the number of taught hours per week in full-time courses;
- establish learning and assessment centres with staff relating to customers for their full contractual hours;
- make appointments where appropriate on non-academic scales;
- switch resources from running expenses to staffing;
- ensure that all staff are working to full efficiency whatever their role, so that savings can be redeployed.

Clearly it will be easier to increase flexibility where the college is already within nationally agreed efficiency targets, e.g. staff/student ratios. In general, the larger the institution, the more flexibility there will be. However, Senior Managers have the key responsibility for ensuring that APL and associated services are delivered. They will set the tone and pace and **create** the flexibility without which middle managers are hamstrung. It is necessary to accept that there is an element of 'risk-taking' in this. Although APL is a 'good risk investment' - resources **could** be wasted with disastrous effects on efficiency, if staff are available and APL customers do not materialise or if their top-up learning requirements cannot be met. This is why only senior managers can achieve results; it is not reasonable to expect departmental heads to take risks if their superiors do not.

CONTROL AND MONITORING

Once the decision is taken to support APL, and necessary staffing flexibilities are agreed, the role of senior managers becomes that of monitoring and evaluating results. Broadly, information will be required on:

- amount of staff time devoted to the various stages of APL;
- number of customers involved;
- number of achievements e.g. qualifications including VQ or NVQ units gained;
- number of customers without standard entry requirements progressing to specified learning units/modules/courses/ programmes.

Monitoring the delivery of APL within flexible assessment and learning services requires flexible Management Information Systems

(MIS). For this reason Colleges A and B are currently piloting such systems (e.g. the Coventry system) in curriculum areas which have adopted flexible approaches.

Analysing the information will enable managers to evaluate the effectiveness of APL and decide whether it is a useful way to proceed. It must however, be put in context with other factors such as the number of new customers attracted to the institution; the effect on the whole institution and its market position; and the effect on future income-generating capacity.

ANALYSING APL OPTIONS

Departmental heads will need to decide the size and shape of the APL service they wish to offer, and how it relates to overall college operations.

Questions to be asked include:

- Are staff prepared, and if not, what further training and development do they need?
- Which staff will be deployed on APL, and what effects, positive and negative, might this have on the department?
- Which group(s) should be targeted? – e.g. all those who might benefit, people in work, particular industrial sectors, etc?
- Is it necessary to earn income from APL or is it a cost that should be carried in the interests of an improved service?
- How will staff be deployed across the stages of APL, and how much time will be needed?
- How will APL affect staff-student ratios (SSRs), and how much variation from the norm is allowed?
- How many clients can be expected in the planning period concerned?

Broadly, APL may either be taken on as an integral part of the whole department's operation, or it may be restricted to a smaller cost-recovery process. The minimum requirements are:

- allocation of a given amount of staff time to do certain jobs, e.g. six hours a week for screening, six hours for assessment and three hours for assessment advice/counselling;
- allocation of required rooms/facilities for certain hours per week;
- implementation of a process by which clients may be related to assessors;
- agreed arrangements with awarding bodies to use APL towards qualifications;
- a charging structure which reflects whether APL is to be primarily income-generating or simply a part of the department's offer.

COSTS AND COST EFFECTIVENESS OF APL

All heads of department will be concerned with the actual costs of APL. Although the staff time consumed for a given level of APL service will be known, it is difficult to relate this to the actual service delivered. For example in a given period, 72 staff hours may be employed to provide an APL service. Twenty clients may have been seen, but the number of vocational qualifications credited to them in that time may vary from none to twenty, or more. The total number of unit credits in a similar period may vary from 40 to 400 depending

on the customers and their relative degrees of readiness. Departmental heads need to be clear that there is no simple way to relate 'inputs' to the APL process to 'outputs' in the sense of satisfied customers. Different customers will have different versions of satisfaction, some will have much greater achievements than others. **The only way at the moment to 'cost' APL is on an 'opportunity-costing' basis.** This means that a judgement may be made about the value of a given amount of staff time being used to provide APL as against being used to do something else such as face-to-face teaching.

In **assessing the costs and cost effectiveness of APL**, departmental heads will need to collect information on:

- total number of APL customers served by the department;
- total number of APL customers progressing to courses, programmes or jobs without necessarily receiving formal accreditation;
- level of income, if any, generated.

The following questions may then be asked:

- could these results have been produced more effectively?
- was staff time wasted in terms of number of customers and amount of credit achieved or evidence of progression resulting from APL?
- did offering APL produce qualitative benefits, e.g. higher profile for the department, greater recruitment, enhanced image amongst employers.

Where cost recovery work is concerned, departmental heads will need to adapt a **preliminary costing** based on assumptions about:

- expected number of customers;
- volume of customers each staff member may be expected to see in a given period;
- amount of time required for APL;
- amount and cost of staff time to be deployed for APL;
- anticipated number of achievements expected per customer, if required?

This will then need to be modified in practice. For example:

A contract with a large hotel group to provide APL for its catering staff

Numbers of customers to be seen	=	30 every 12 weeks or 100 over the current academic year
Cost of 1 member of staff for 30 hours per week for 36 weeks with on-costs	=	£20,000
So cost per customer is £200.00.		
Staff contact ratio	=	12 hours per customer or 1 hour per week on average.

Resourcing the Flexible Curriculum Peter Wilson

This figure would in practice be affected by all sorts of factors, for example:

- the college/ department may pass on only actual cost of hours required, not full on-costs;
- it may be sensible to offer an initial screening cost, plus an assessment cost, so that the company does not pay £200 for someone with little or no prior learning achievements to credit. If the staff member is in place, it would be sensible to recruit additional clients up to a reasonable workload to recoup otherwise lost income.

(Complete marginal costing systems are also possible. Members of staff could provide APL for all departmental clients as (part of) their normal workload. In this case all extra clients on a cost-recovery basis are an additional source of new income.) **Pricing APL services** will very much depend on local conditions and decisions, and on the college's wish to be competitive in the marketplace.

Most colleges are experimenting with different models as described in *Flexible Colleges: Access to Learning and Accreditation in Further Education* (FEU 1991).

At College A individual APL customers seeking unit credits towards qualifications in Catering and Hairdressing are currently charged:

- a flat fee for initial screening and action planning;
- a fee for portfolio preparation/assessment based on the average number of learning hours required to achieve the unit of the qualification towards which credit is sought by APL.

APL also lends itself very well to **achievement-led resourcing** by which payment is only made for accredited achievements.(See 'What is achievement-led resourcing?' at the end of this section)

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

APL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

The key to embedding APL at faculty or department level is to recognise APL as an extension of existing assessment and accreditation arrangements. This allows APL customers who may well be existing students to receive credit for what they have already achieved, by giving them direct access to assessment. Because evidence of their achievements could/should come from **either** past outside sources **or** from direct entry to tests and assessments, special assessment facilities have to be provided. As this report makes clear, these involve some sort of initial screening, together with referral for advice about suitable evidence and flexible access to assessment, accreditation and further learning if required. 'Assessment only' needs to become an accepted category of enrolment, since customers may not wish to enrol for a course. Flexible fee structures are therefore needed. At College A fees can be calculated on the basis of the number of learning hours bought by the customer.

Developing APL facilities is all part of general moves to make all aspects of the customer's experience of the college more flexible. Developing APL with flexible arrangements for enrolment, learning, assessment attendance, etc. requires a focus on the 'binding' services which enable a customer who is not (or not yet) enrolled on a formal course, to find his/her way around and make the best use of what is offered.

Existing guidance, admissions and support services will almost certainly need extending for the APL customer. It is important to work outwards from what exists, like each of the colleges participating in this project.

Staff flexibility

Staff flexibility is the key to all other flexibility. Staff time must be found to perform the tasks that APL involves. There may already be information and guidance services which could be expanded to include initial screening for APL. If not, they will need to be established. Assessment time can only come from the overall staff time resource available to a department or section. It can be released by reducing teaching input hours to existing courses and by enabling students to learn in new, more independent, ways, such as using individual learning packages or resources available in a learning centre.

Initially, assessment might be provided by one or two members of staff for a given period each week. As demand grows this can be increased until an assessment service/centre, permanently staffed, becomes feasible.

There also need to be 'accounting procedures' to produce a **case-load system for APL** staff and monitor the contribution of APL to achievement. In some colleges this has been achieved with existing systems for open learning or workshop provision which enable managers to plan and phase expansion on a reasonable basis.

WHAT IS ACHIEVEMENT LED-RESOURCING (ALR)?

There is now a growing body of work on how resources might be related not simply to numbers of students or customers served, but to actual achievements, usually measured in terms of qualifications or credits towards them. This stems from dissatisfaction with resources related simply to numbers, regardless of achievement.

At the moment, colleges receive resources in relation to the FTE numbers of students. Although achievements, particularly qualifications gained, are monitored, there is rarely any direct connection to resources. Colleges may have incentives to increase numbers, but not specifically to improve achievements, or enable achievements to be gained more quickly. If, however, resources were also related to achievements, e.g. the numbers of qualifications including NVQs and NVQ units obtained, the role of APL would be highlighted.

This is because funds could be provided for actual work done by the college rather than a place on a course or programme. Providing APL facilities is often as much work as traditional classroom teaching, and resources could be directed accordingly. Similarly, if resources relate to successful completion of an NVQ for example, either the providing body could reduce resources where this was not achieved or the college could be paid an agreed sum regardless of mode of learning, etc. This latter option would be a powerful incentive to enable the customer to complete the qualification quickly, to minimise use of resources, and to enable another 'fixed sum' customer to be enrolled, so increasing turnover and revenue.

At present, resourcing from LEAs to colleges is governed by ERA, but there are two ways in which ALR could be applied to APL.

i) contracts with employers to provide APL for employees could be agreed on a 'payment per unit achieved' basis;

ii) internal college resourcing could be organised by resourcing each faculty or department to produce an agreed number of units or qualifications.

However, ALR requires sophisticated commercial management. For example managers must load on to any agreed level of resource per unit the costs of the screening and assessment processes that are required before achievement can be substantiated. Similarly, it would be sensible to agree a separate figure for initial screening since a percentage of clients will not register any achievements. This sort of thinking is much more difficult than simply agreeing a unit of resource per student per course.

The great advantage, however would be that APL, and similar new (learner) services, would be legitimated in relation to their resource needs. They would contribute to gaining actual achievements for clients and could therefore claim resources within the institution.

There are also difficulties with this approach, not least that whenever resources are tied to achievements, it may be taken as an inducement to maximise achievements by only recruiting the most capable learners. This sort of problem has led to attempts to match resources not simply to terminal achievements, but to 'value-added', the progress any one customer/learner has made while in college. APL would be a special case since learning progress and achievements would have occurred outside the college, and the resource required would be that involved in assessing and accrediting it.

Because of the importance of this work, College A, in conjunction with its LEA, has mounted a joint LEA/FEU funded ALR project which is in its second year*. It is still too early to report concrete results, but if the procedures currently under trial can be applied to APL, this would provide an added boost to APL development in the college. It is likely that other colleges will wish to explore this work as APL develops.

* The perspectives of both College and LEA are informing an NCVQ Working Party set up to report on the same topic.

SECTION 4 MANAGING STAFF AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR APL INTRODUCTION

This section is designed to provide help and support for managers of APL staff and curriculum development. It is aimed at staff with cross-college/service development roles related for example to:

- assessment/APL
- guidance
- access and progression
- flexible/open learning
- NVQ implementation
- staff and curriculum development
- customer/client/student services

What follows are:

(i) a checklist of key questions which need to be given careful consideration in order to carry out management responsibilities involving:

A preparing

B planning and implementation

C control and monitoring

D contributing to institutional development

(ii) suggested tactics to answer the questions concerning strategic and operational planning decisions;

(iii) examples of approaches adopted in the participating colleges, provided as abbreviated accounts which:

- illustrate how the strategies they used combined various tactics appearing in the checklist;
- show how far the tactics were effective;
- indicate some of the problems they experienced;

KEY QUESTIONS you need to answer.	**SUGGESTED TACTICS** to help you answer them.
A PREPARING	
What are your objectives?	1. Analyse your (APL) Action Plan to: ● map out its staff and curriculum development implications; ● plan possible strategies.
Which staff are you trying to involve?	2. Identify which staff and curriculum areas you need to target for: ● awareness raising; ● needs identification; ● development activities/training.
What resources are available for appropriate staff to organise/deliver and undertake: ● awareness raising? ● needs identification? ● development activities/training? ● monitoring review and evaluation? ● dissemination?	3. Liaise with relevant staff to investigate possible: ● sources of funding; ● contributors by networking to find relevant internal and external expertise. 4. Be opportunist and creative. Consider imaginative combinations of: ● funding sources; ● contributors.
B PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION	
What are your options?	5. Generate ideas for planning and implementation by consulting relevant colleagues and external advisors.
Which staff and strategies will you use to organise and support: ● APL awareness raising? ● needs identification specific to planning and delivering APL within central admissions services? ● in relation to particular courses/ qualifications? ● development activities/training need to plan and deliver APL within central admissions services? ● in relation to particular courses/qualifications?	6. Use approaches which attempt to balance cost effectiveness with quality. 7. Focus action on what is feasible for your staff and your college. 8. Make maximum use of internal expertise: ● other staff with cross-college responsibility or interests in APL, NVQ, student services; ● existing networks between any of the above; ● relevant working groups developing flexible learning assessment, APL. 9. Draw on external expertise where necessary; consultants, trainers to provide specific information/training. 10. Support team-based activities/training which are: ● targeted; ● cumulative; ● task-oriented; ● recognised.

KEY QUESTIONS you need to answer.	**SUGGESTED TACTICS** to help you answer them.
C CONTROLLING AND MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION	
How will you know how far you are achieving your objectives?	11. Be directive (assuming you have overall responsibility?). 12. Negotiate and agree with all staff involved: • their individual and collective responsibilities; • workable communication procedures; • formal reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems. Try to keep to what you agree.
D ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES DEVELOPMENT	
What action will you take to help embed APL and learner services in your college?	13. Establish and/or support dissemination procedures related to APL development and delivery: • identify transferable lessons to be learnt from APL development work. 14. Have regular formal meetings with senior management/relevant staff to: • provide feedback on progress, staff concerns, etc; • raise and prioritise issues which need to be addressed; • suggest action/ changes needed in other systems and procedures to support APL development and delivery.

COLLEGE A

ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

College A used its action plan to help implement and develop APL-related aspects of a 'customer-centred' corporate development strategy. Its objectives were to:

1. use one faculty as an exemplar within which to develop transferable models of APL development and delivery:
   - to enhance flexible assessment and learning services available or planned for particular catering qualifications;
   - to stimulate the development of similar services in relation to management qualifications;
2. apply these models to support plans for APL development elsewhere in the organisation including within central assessment and guidance services;
3. link APL and achievement-led resourcing (ALR) development work.

STRATEGIES

Strategies adopted to support achievement of these objectives *(Tactic 1)* include:

1. **Using a College Development Service (CDS) Faculty one of the functions of which is to manage staff and curriculum development.**

   Senior managers within CDS include a Customer Focus Manager (CFM) and others with related responsibilities for curriculum support and development and communication across the college.

2. **Adopting a two-pronged staff and curriculum development strategy** *(Tactics 7 and 8)*

   Using specific examples of APL development and delivery to inform cross-college awareness raising and skills development.

3. **Using flexible combinations of college development funding and project-related resources to support both prongs of its strategy.** *(Tactics 4 and 8)*

4. **Establishing a cross-college APL development and support group** *(Tactics 2, 5, 7, 8, 9)*

   Members of this group were 0.5 senior lecturer secondments under a work-related further education (WRFE) implementation of competence-based qualifications (CBQs) project who had both subject-specific and broader NVQ and APL responsibilities. Guided by the Customer Focus Manager they have, for example:
   - organised college- and authority-wide NVQ/APL awareness raising and sharing sessions;
   - developed a referral system to link central and dispersed APL services once the former are operational;
   - held National Record of Vocational Achievement (NROVA) workshops for academic and support staff;
   - piloted APL on a small scale by building on the flexibility and expertise which have been developed in certain vocational areas, i.e. hairdressing, catering, retailing, technology and office and administration.

5. **Encouraging networking between staff with APL responsibilities and interests.** *(Tactics 7 and 8)*

   Networking has helped to integrate development work across levels, faculties and sites in the college and different parts of the Continuing Education and Training (CET) Service across the Authority.*

   Substantial progress has been achieved. Not surprisingly the main problems relate to difficulties in:

   - directing and co-ordinating work in different areas, for example to promote common approaches to APL;
   - avoiding frustration caused by established administrative and decision-making procedures which are still understandably locked into the requirements of traditional provision.

   Some of the ways these problems are being addressed are:

   - tightening up reporting, monitoring and evaluation procedures *(Tactic 12)*;
   - modifying communication and administrative systems so that they support rather than hinder staff, curriculum and institutional services development. The relatively recent appointment of a senior manager responsible for information and communication to work in CDS indicates the high priority given to this issue *(Tactic 14)*;
   - improving dissemination procedures for example by using Staff Information Points and increasing the frequency of newsletters to update staff on APL and other development work to enhance flexibility and access *(Tactic 13)*;
   - formalising regular evaluation and planning meetings between senior CDS managers and the principalship *(Tactic 14)*.

6. **Supporting-team based approaches to APL development and delivery** *(Tactic 10)* **in relation to:**

   - catering qualifications, namely the CGL1 706(1) and BTEC National Diploma in Hotel, Catering and Institutional Operations;
   - management qualifications concentrating on the BTEC Certificate of Management Studies (CMS) and equivalent competence standards produced under the Management Charter Initiative (MCI).

   Further details of this work are provided in Section 5.

7. **Using a combination of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** *(Tactics 12 and 14)* including:

   i) College and authority-wide APL sharing days drawing, for example, on the achievements of and issues raised by teams involved in 6 above;

   ii) regular meetings between senior CDS staff, other heads of faculty and the principalship;

   iii) informal planning and evaluation sessions within and across the working groups referred to in the previous strategies;

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* The Continuing Education and Training (CET) Service spanning Further and Adult Education is the outcome of an LEA strategy to establish coherent post-16 education and training services.

iv) systematic record keeping to establish the real costs, in staff time, of central services which are currently available;

v) using case studies drawn from small scale APL pilots and issues raised by this project to identify ways of flexing up finance and administration procedures.

COLLEGE C

ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

This college's action plan was produced by an APL design group comprising a vice principal, director of assessment and the project manager *(Tactic 5)*.

Its main objectives were:

1. to produce a strategy to develop and introduce APL within cross college guidance supported admissions (GSA) services;
2. to pilot learner-centred guidance and assessment procedures
   - within a learning recognition workshop (LRW);
   - in relation to a small but representative sample of vocational qualifications (VQs) including NVQs;
3. to provide staff and curriculum development to support 1. and 2. above.

STRATEGIES

Approaches used to achieve these objectives *(Tactic 1)* involved

1. **Establishing a cross-college GSA Strategy Group.** *(Tactics 5,8,9)*

   Contributors to this group were:

   - the heads of General Education and key vocational departments committed to or interested in developing guidance and assessment systems;
   - cross-college staff, the director of assessment, flexible learning co-ordinator and senior lecturers with access responsibilities;
   - an external consultant, the project manager.

2. **Conducting an audit of existing approaches to initial guidance and assessment** *(Tactics 5, 6 7)*

   An audit questionnaire (Appendix 2) was designed and used with a number of course teams to provide a 'dipstick reading' of learner-centredness in mainstream curriculum arrangements for:

   - pre-entry guidance including procedures for marketing and dealing with enquiries;
   - selection;
   - induction;
   - initial assessment including APL for diagnosis, exemption and possible accreditation;
   - learning delivery.

   Resource constraints prevented using the questionnaire to support semi-structured interviews with course team representatives. As expected there were also inconsistencies in the data provided about full-time courses on returned questionnaires. Nonetheless the exercise provided:

- specific examples of an encouraging increase in flexibility which was however mainly limited to learning rather than assessment opportunities;
- additional evidence that APL expertise and approaches were marginalised in development-funded projects, short non-examinable courses, adult return-to-learn programmes and new initiatives, e.g. GCSE Home Study programmes.

3. **Selecting a sample of VQs for which APL procedures were to be intensively piloted.**

   The sample to be targeted for APL 'hothousing' was selected to include:

   - NVQs and other VQs for which APL for accreditation was more problematic;
   - different awarding body regulations and assessment requirements;
   - APL work currently supported by development projects which stood some chance of continuing under mainstream curriculum funding;
   - staff with a broad range of APL experience including expertise developed in relation to Access and the TEED/NCVQ APL pilot *(Tactic 3)*.

   The qualifications selected as APL pilots using a combination of LEA/TEED/college funding were: C&G 726 Computing and Information Technology; C&G 706(1) Catering; BTEC National Diploma in Public Administration and NVQs levels II and III in Hairdressing *(Tactic 4)*.

   Some of this work produced useful examples of APL procedures and learner services development (see Section 5).

4. **Designing and delivering a programme of targeted cumulative development activities to support 3 above.**

   The programme consisted of a series of five two-hour practical workshops covering the skills needed to manage and deliver:

   - pre-entry guidance and admissions services;
   - APL geared to learners' needs;
   - negotiated learning programmes.

   It was designed as a coherent 'package' by cross-college staff responsible for assessment, access and APL *(Tactic 8)* and:

   - planned to run in parallel with curriculum development occurring through 3 above;
   - targeted at staff from course teams involved in or likely to be influenced by 3 above;
   - facilitated by a team of contributors combining relevant internal and external expertise *(Tactics 8 and 9)*.

   Its main objectives were to:

   - share and build on the skills of particular staff;
   - stimulate the development of common approaches to assessment and guidance within the VQ pilot work.

   The first of these objectives was partially achieved. The second was frustrated by problems of timetabling, funding and co-ordination which meant that:

- the composition of the staff group involved was different from that planned, and varied from workshop to workshop;
- the programme delivered therefore deviated from its original design.

5. **Using a combination of formal and informal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** *(Tactics 12 and 14).*

   These included:

   - informal planning and evaluation meetings between staff delivering and involved in 4 above *(Tactic 12)*;
   - formal minutes of the APL design and GSA strategy group *(Tactic 14)*;
   - a two-strand evaluation procedure to measure progress in the development of new systems for APL and student services *(Tactic 12)* and consider a pragmatic way forward for the college *(Tactic 14)*.

   Using a common evaluation framework (see Appendix 3) separate seminars with some cross representation were arranged for:

   - staff actually involved in development and delivery to discuss achievements, problems and issues requiring action by senior management;
   - cross-college staff and departmental managers to consider ways of addressing key institutional and management issues including those raised above.

   Although the evaluation process could not involve all key staff due to conflicting commitments and timetabling problems, the two-tiered approach proved a useful model. The key messages in the subsequent report which drew together the perspectives of both seminar groups were that:

   - sufficient expertise existed to offer coherent APL services in relation to particular curriculum areas;
   - the immediate need was to co-ordinate and support this expertise within a resourced and planned framework;
   - concentrating future development work within new departments might be more effective in producing and agreeing a strategy to embed APL.

COLLEGE B

ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

Given its severely restricted resources this college limited its action plans to:

1. integrating and if possible developing APL within plans for centralised student admissions services;
2. piloting APL as an option within part-time provision leading to NVQs at level 2 in Business and Administration *(Tactic 7)*.

STRATEGIES

Achieving these objectives required opportunistic and creative strategies to make maximum use of minimum resources *(Tactics 4 and 6)* including:

1. **Establishing an APL team** *(Tactic 8)*

   This linked the following staff already actively involved in developing central student services:

- one middle manager with cross-college responsibilities for Open Learning, Community Education, Student Services and NVQ implementation;
- four other staff including three with experience of APL in Access and Provision for Women Returners and one who took sole responsibility for objective 2 as part of her responsibility for developing NVQ approaches in the Business Administration area.

The team adopted a self-directed, do-it-yourself approach to staff and curriculum development supported by periodic advice and assistance from an external consultant, the project manager *(Tactic 9)*. The cross-college middle manager had to spend a large proportion of his time securing a series of 'stop-gap' funding arrangements to support development work related to both action plan objectives.

2. **A team-based approach to integrating central student admissions services** *(Tactic 10)*.

During weekly meetings and a considerable amount of their own time the APL team:

- developed an integrated system for central student information and support services which were already physically located in the same general reception area (see Appendix 4);
- refined initial diagnostic assessment/informal APL more effectively with admissions procedures;
- produced associated documentation including a monitoring enquiry card, student information packs and materials to support informal APL within personal action planning.

One of the main problems was inconsistent commitment from specialist vocational staff to centralised advice and counselling. These reservations were partly due to doubts about the competence of generalists (central staff) to provide appropriate advice on specific courses and qualifications. Attempts to hold more regular consultative meetings between central and specialist staff are helping to ease some of these tensions.

3. **Using the APL process as a vehicle for staff development.** *(Tactics 4,6,8,10)*

The same team decided to support one another though the APL process as a cost-effective strategy which would allow them to:

- integrate their individual APL expertise and if possible seek some form of accreditation;
- develop a common approach to supporting the APL process which, resources permitting, will eventually inform APL procedures formally adopted within central services;
- record problems they experienced and strategies used to produce practical guidelines for staff and APL candidates.

Progress made in each of the above has been affected by the simultaneous demands of strategy 2. They are seeking accreditation under the Management Charter Initiative (MCI) Experienced Managers APL Project. Again shortage of time and lack of clerical support have created problems. Not surprisingly staff are finding it difficult to achieve the above, collect suitable evidence, and organise their top-up training requirements.

4. **Using specific development work to inform general awareness raising** *(Tactics 6 and 14)*

The work of the team has contributed to various awareness-raising events. A particularly useful session entitled *APL and Student Services: What's feasible for the College* was attended by representatives from course teams and both senior and middle management. Building on the work of the APL team the session was designed to prompt staff responsible for different aspects of the college's operations to:

- share their perceptions of feasibility;
- reach joint decisions about realistic future plans for APL which recognised its resourcing and operational needs as well as its staff development implications.

As a result tentative plans have been made to:

- offer APL for possible credit towards NVQs for interested support staff, particularly those providing central reception and admissions services;
- concentrate APL development in a selection of curriculum areas which have already progressed to learner-centred approaches;
- seek TEC funding to pump-prime employer-linked APL services;
- use C&G Awards for Trainers and Assessors (929/3 and 929/4) to accredit training for relevant college tutors and work-based assessors.

SECTION 5 TEAM-BASED APL DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

INTRODUCTION

This section is aimed at organisers and members of course teams who are either planning or already involved in APL development. It assumes that course/programme teams often take responsibility for managing their own development activities and may be supported by staff with the sort of cross-college/service-related roles referred to in the previous section.

For this reason the materials which follow complement the content and format of Section 4:

i) **a checklist of key questions** which need to be considered to carry out APL development and delivery involving

   A preparing

   B planning and implementation

   C control and monitoring

   D contributing to institutional development.

ii) **suggested tactics** to help teams answer these questions and devise suitable strategies;

iii) **examples of approaches adopted in the participating colleges,** provided as abbreviated accounts which illustrate how they used some of the tactics appearing in the checklist; show how far the tactics were effective and indicate some of the problems they experienced.

KEY QUESTIONS you need to answer.	**SUGGESTED TACTICS** to help you answer them.
A. PREPARING	
Who are your potential customers?	1. Consult line managers, local market information, staff with marketing responsibilities. Consider the categories of customers listed (see Section 1).
Are there particular customers who are more likely to: ● produce viable numbers of APL candidates? ● generate income? ● produce new business for your department/ faculty/college? ● enhance retention or achievement rates?	2. Explore potential interest in APL services with: ● existing student groups e.g. part-time, evening, block release vocational courses; ● current employer contacts; ● possible new contacts, via TECs, using personal contacts, experience within the team.
What sort of APL services are technically possible?	3. Consider: ● awarding body regulations and guidelines referring to APL for access, exemption or accreditation; ● whether the qualification lends itself to APL, is available in unit form, competence based, an NVQ, etc.
What sort of APL services are practically feasible?	4. Establish exactly how flexible current course learner service arrangements are for: ● pre-entry guidance; ● selection; ● enrolment/ induction; ● assessment; ● accreditation; ● learning.
What are your staff and curriculum needs?	5. Compare your current arrangements with the services needed to support APL for customers wanting: ● diagnosis, careers education and guidance; ● access; ● exemption; ● accreditation.
What resources are available to meet your staff and curriculum development needs?	6. Liaise with line managers and staff with relevant cross-college roles to discuss: ● possible reduced class contact arrangements; ● support available via development projects, teams and working groups involved in APL, flexible approaches, etc; ● outline plans to meet your staff and service development needs. Decide what is feasible over what sort of time scale.

KEY QUESTIONS you need to answer.	**SUGGESTED TACTICS** to help you answer them.
B. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION	
How will you develop your APL plans? What are your options?	7. Generate ideas and devise specific plans which • draw on staff mentioned in tactic 6 above; • build on existing flexibility in course/learner service arrangements; • use the expertise of staff in your own course team.
What strategies will you use to: • co-ordinate staff and curriculum development? • develop a workable APL procedure? • develop an APL team? • help members of the team develop the necessary specialist skills to function as APL advisors, assessors, co-ordinators?	8. Focus development work on an agreed model of delivery which is: • based on relevant awarding body requirements and guidelines; • feasible in your working circumstances. 9. Adopt an incremental approach over a realistic lead-in to delivery time. 10. Use team-based development activities which are: • cumulative; • task oriented; • recognised; • supported if possible by the links referred to in tactic 6.
What systems and procedures do you need to deliver APL?	11. Agree individual and collective responsibilities as well as procedures for: • co-ordination and administration; • each stage in the APL process; • organising the practicalities e.g. accommodation, documentation, etc. 12. Agree with your Head of Department any special arrangements needed for: • resourcing the service; • costing and pricing the service; • provding top-up assessment and learning; • employer-related provision.

KEY QUESTIONS you need to answer.

SUGGESTED TACTICS to help you answer them.

C CONTROLLING AND MONITORING

How will you monitor progress in development and/or ensure your APL service meets your customers' needs?

13. Keep to the procedures agreed in tactic 11 above and sort out workable recording systems for monitoring and evaluation. Build APL team meeting time into your resource allocation for deliver.

D ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES DEVELOPMENT.

What action will you take to help embed APL and learner services in your college?

14. Operate an effective and efficient service using for example, tactics 11 – 13 above.

15. Organise periodic meetings with relevant contacts, including cross-college staff to:
    - provide feedback on progress, staff concerns;
    - raise issues which need to be addressed;
    - suggest action and changes needed in other systems and procedures to support APL development and delivery.

16. Contribute to the development of systems for resourcing APL from the college's mainstream budget. Agree with relevant staff ways of monitoring the actual costs of APL in terms of staff time.

The following approaches to APL pilot implementation were either developed from or refined within the framework of the colleges' action plans.

COLLEGE A

A CATERING

Systematic APL procedures were developed and are currently being used in relation to the following qualifications:

i) C&G 706(1) Cookery Processes;

ii) BTEC National Diploma in Hotel Catering and Institutional Operations.

Why were these qualifications selected?

1. They were located in a school (equivalent to department) which was already committed to flexibility and access *(Tactic 7)*;
2. Establishing formal APL procedures would enhance the flexibility of mainstream curriculum arrangements available for C&G 706(1) and planned for the BTEC National Diploma *(Tactic 7)* with:
   - informal APL techniques to provide fast-tracking and access to standard assessments;
   - access to flexible 'pick and mix' unit-based learning and assessment;
   - access to resource-based learning materials and related tutorial support;
   - flexible enrolment and fee systems.
3. The feasibility of APL in relation to CG706(1) had been proved.
4. Developing a formal APL procedure across the two qualifications with several common competences made sense in terms of its market potential as a service *(Tactic 1)*.

What approach was used?

A team of four staff with expertise spanning both qualifications have adopted a task-based approach to development work *(Tactic 10)* supported by:

- remission resourced from the college development fund and evaluated against stated objectives;
- access to advice and APL skills training provided by an external consultant (the project manager) and one member of the cross-college APL support and development group *(Tactic 7)*.

Members of the team shared responsibility for:

1. producing APL documentation, materials and marketing strategies which involved:
   - making some of the modifications to objectives and course design needed to facilitate APL in relation to the BTEC National Diploma;
   - producing additional independent learning materials;
   - modifying or producing assignments as necessary to meet the combined needs of on-course and APL candidates;
   - designing and producing a catering-specific guide to portfolio preparation including self-assessment materials;
   - producing publicity materials including a video for advertising on cable TV;

- developing and undertaking various marketing strategies mostly involving current employer contacts and semi-structured interviews with training and personnel managers *(Tactic 2)*;
- consulting with the Head of School to arrive at interim arrangements for costing APL services based on the existing flexible fee system.

2. devising a workable APL procedure based on an agreed stages model of delivery (see Appendix 5) *(Tactic 8)*.

   The key features of this procedure which is now operating are:

   - the use of self-assessment record sheets and paper-based portfolio preparation/guidance materials to reduce staff time and costs;
   - delivery of APL by a team of subject specialists each of whom functions as both an advisor and assessor but only performs one of these functions for any one candidate;
   - guidance provided by any member of the team over specified periods of time using a duty rota system;
   - assessment of evidence from outside sources and current assessments by member(s) of the team with expertise directly related to the qualification towards which the candidate is seeking credit;
   - top-up learning and assessment by:

     either infill into appropriate units of mainstream provision (CGLI 706(1))

     or structured workshops provided as full cost recovery short courses outside the traditional college year (BTEC National Diploma).

3. contributing to various APL sharing events to stimulate further development within the Hotel and Catering School and across the college.

Problems

The main problems encountered relate to:

- lack of certainty about continued funding for APL development and delivery due to delays in decision-making procedures related to resource allocation;
- frustration caused by the decision by CGL1 to limit APL for accreditation to those of its qualifications which are full NVQs. This excludes the 706(1), despite the fact that it lends itself so readily to APL techniques;
- anxiety about providing systematic top-up assessment and learning on a larger scale than at present given that all practical facilities and existing flexibility are totally utilised. A flexible working year agreement recently concluded with NATFHE should help solve this problem by creating greater operational flexibility.

Future plans

Plans supported by the head of school have been made to:

- refine the above college-based procedure into a more efficient APL service;
- design an equivalent procedure to meet employers' needs for APL as a stand-alone accreditation service or as part of an initial training needs (ITN)/customised training package.

B MANAGEMENT

APL pilot development has focused on the BTEC Certificate of Management Studies (CMS).

Why was this qualification selected?

1. An energetic creative course team were already using learner-centred approaches within, what was at the start of development work, an integrated thematic course model *(Tactic 7)*.
2. The team were already involved in the development of competence-based approaches through participation in the National MCI Competence Standards pilot *(Tactic 6)*.
3. There were informal links with the MCI Experienced Managers APL pilot through the research connections of one member of staff in the local Business School. She was subsequently appointed APL co-ordinator for Management and was a member of the cross-college APL support and development group *(Tactic 6)*.
4. The head of school was keen to make the CMS pilot a successful exemplar from which to develop the market potential of APL and customer-centred approaches to other management qualifications *(Tactic 2)*.

What approach was used?

Staff and curriculum development for modular competence-based delivery (phase 1) formed the basis for developing APL procedures (phase 2). Both phases, which in practice overlapped, were supported by:

- remission over an extended time scale (two terms) resourced from the college development fund;
- access to advice and support from the APL co-ordinator and an external consultant (the project manager) *(Tactic 7)*;
- training in APL advisory and assessment skills provided through links with the MCI APL pilot *(Tactic 7)*.

Phase 1. Competence-based delivery

The CMS team mapped out and shared responsibility for the tasks *(Tactic 10)* involved in:

- **converting an integrated course into a series of modules** which could be matched approximately to relevant MCI competence units.
- **redesigning existing assessment methods and materials*** to cater for the assessment of management specific competences as well as core skills.

Phase 2 APL development

An extended process of consultation involving the CMS team, APL co-ordinator and head of school has been necessary to:

- plan feasible approaches to APL delivery. These are based on the MCI Model *(Tactic 8)* and draw on the advisory and assessment skills developed by particular members of the team.

In parallel with work specific to the CMS the APL co-ordinator has:

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* Much of what was involved appears in parts of the Action Plan checklist to develop *'Flexible Access to Vocational Qualifications'* NIACE/REPLAN (1990)

- raised the profile of APL within the Business School by providing awareness raising sessions for a number of other staff, and supporting appropriate curriculum development related to other qualifications;
- explored the market potential of employer-linked APL by building on her research, contacts and organising an employer awareness raising conference. To enhance learner service development within the Business School and the college as a whole, relatively formal procedures have been used to monitor the progress of this pilot and provide feedback to senior management. *(Tactics 13, 14, 15)*. These procedures have been informed by:
  - precise records of CMS/APL development work;
  - notes on problems and issues raised during meetings between staff directly or indirectly involved in the pilot;
  - monthly progress reports from the APL co-ordinator.

Problems and future plans

1. The extended timescale of APL development work has provided the space time and support needed for key staff to:
   - develop gradual ownership of the changes involved in enhancing flexibility and access;
   - address problems related to resistance to change, including concerns about standards;
   - work through uncertainty caused by what has until recently been a confused picture of national developments in management qualifications;
   - cope with the pressure caused by simultaneous development and heavy teaching commitments.

Although the staffing and accommodation implications of APL have yet to be addressed, a significant number of staff including operational managers are now confident of its benefits and committed to its implementation. Evidence of this commitment are plans for APL:

- as an option within a joint college/employer CMS programme
- as a full cost-recovery service offered to corporate customers.

COLLEGE C

To inform a strategy for APL within Guidance Supported Admissions (GSA) services, College C piloted APL in a selection of contexts between January 1990 and March 1991 for the purposes of guidance, access, fast-tracking and accreditation.

A. APL FOR DIAGNOSIS, GUIDANCE AND ACCESS.

The Learning Recognition Workshop (LRW) was an LEA-funded pilot over one year. APL was used as a tool to offer pre-entry guidance and the opportunity for portfolio building to a group of adult returners whose characteristics included:

- uncertainty about their future direction and opportunities available;
- mixed experience of paid and unpaid work;
- lack of confidence and/or English language skills.

What approach was used?

The workshop was operated by two tutors, one from the General Education department with extensive expertise in APL, the other a member of Careers staff with relevant knowledge and sophisticated guidance and counselling skills *(Tactic 7)*.

The tutors adapted the stages model of APL illustrated in Appendix 6. *(Tactic 8)*. Given the characteristics of the group, they spent a significant proportion of their time on information giving, pre-entry guidance, careers counselling and confidence boosting. APL was the thread used to:

- support and integrate this work which included the opportunity to build portfolios to suit individual needs;
- boost confidence, identify strengths and weaknesses and in some cases provide evidence of achievements.

In most cases learners progressed to non-vocational including Access courses or pre-vocational programmes for a number of reasons:

- some learners were still unsure of their direction at the end of the APL process;
- some needed additional learning support, particularly to improve their English, before embarking on a vocational programme;
- the workshop operated on a drop-in basis so those leaving mid year could more easily progress onto short/non-examinable/non-vocational/vocational courses;
- access and progression arrangements for vocational courses are still embryonic.

In a few cases the tutors were able to negotiate access to formal assessment of prior achievements for possible accreditation towards vocational qualifications where:

- portfolio preparation had produced sufficient evidence of achievements;
- links could be made with APL pilots in appropriate qualifications *(Tactic 6)*.

Problems

Problems in negotiating access to vocational courses were due to:

- the limited availability of non-standard entry criteria for most vocational courses except those available in a *Progression Handbook* compiled to assist the progression of Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) students;
- vocational courses being oversubscribed by 'standard' applicants;
- the absence of formal procedures and opportunities to negotiate access and progression with relevant vocational tutors.

Future plans

1. The learning recognition workshop (LRW) has established the sort of APL/guidance procedures ideally required for a particular group of 'customers' within learner-centred admissions arrangements. Staff hope that it will continue within the mainstream curriculum offer of the General Education department and some proposals exist to enhance its effectiveness, for example by strengthening links with vocational departments to help solve some of the problems listed above.

2. Proposals have also been made to use an adaptation of the LRW approach for staff development as follow up to the programme referred to in Section 4. The possibility of accreditation using the RSA Examinations Board Diploma in Management for Teachers and Trainers is also being explored in this context.

B APL FOR ACCREDITATION AND FAST TRACKING TO STANDARD ASSESSMENTS.

1. Computing Pilot: APL in CGL1 726 Computing and Information Technology

This qualification was selected before CGL1 restricted APL for accreditation to a limited number of full NVQs.

What approach was used?

The pilot involved two members of staff with relevant expertise, a 'generalist' adviser from the General Education department and a specialist assessor from the Maths and Science Department. The APL procedure adopted can be summarised as follows:

Information and recruitment: through vocational department recruitment systems and from part- and full-time computing courses.

Pre-entry guidance: involving both members of staff except where the generalist adviser provided guidance for candidates requiring alternatives.

Portfolio preparation: facilitated by the generalist adviser assisted by advice on content from the specialist assessor.

Assessment: carried out by the specialist assessor who also made necessary top-up assessment arrangements.

Learning: provided by the vocational department with study skills support as necessary from the generalist adviser.

This qualification proved particularly suitable for APL using the above approach because:

- there was an easily accessible market for the service. Evidence suggests that significant numbers of individuals, including staff and existing students have acquired computing and IT competences through experiential learning;
- relevant evidence of achievement from the past, i.e. outside sources, tended to be portable, reliable and product oriented;
- the qualification is unit based and includes a large number of optional units;
- providing access to top-up contemporary assessments was relatively easy using existing workshop and staff resources.

Problems

The main problems experienced by the team related to:

- rigidity in college administration systems which were designed for 'block' entries. This made it difficult to register individuals as APL candidates for separate units of the qualification;
- CGL1 regulations, published half way through the pilot, which restrict APL for accreditation to a limited number of its qualifications with full NVQ status and therefore excluded the 726.

Future Plans

Proposals exist to modify the approach developed under the pilot to offer an APL-type enhancement in relation to the BTEC National Computing qualification. The foundation unit of the qualification could be 'de-coupled' from the remaining units and suitable candidates exempted from the foundation unit through APL.

- **Catering Pilot: APL in relation to CGL1 706(1) Cookery processes**

  A limited APL service has been operating in the Catering Section since one member of the team acquired expertise as an assessor under the Training Agency (now TEED, The Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate or the Employment Department)/ NCVQ APL pilot (1987-9).

  Development project funding to implement NVQs had recently been used to enhance learner services arrangements.

What approach was used?

Drawing on existing expertise *(Tactic 7)*, work to develop flexibility and access has included :

- removing all entry restrictions to the qualification (partly in response to low recruitment);
- moving from a single enrolment date to three phases of enrolment and recruitment per year, each of which includes extended diagnostic assessment of core skills and performance-based assessment of vocational competence;
- linking systematic APL to initial assessment arrangements above where appropriate;
- introducing an element of negotiation in learning and assessment arrangements following APL made possible by:
  - modularising the 706(1) course to correspond with the units of the qualification;
  - developing a series of unit based independent learning materials.

Problems

The main problems in attempting to embed these approaches are those related to:

- pricing APL and fees for subsequent top-up assessment and learning;
- resource requirements including staffing and workshop facilities needed for systematic top-up assessment and learning. The operational implications of delivering APL and flexible unit-based learning have still to be addressed by college managers.

C. HAIRDRESSING PILOT

The Hairdressing section was an appropriate context within which to pilot APL as an extension of existing assessment arrangements because:

1. The section was part of a department which was demonstrably committed to customer-centred learning and guidance services. *(Tactic 7)*.
2. Hairdressing was a training and vocational education (TVE) enhanced programme area. The basis for systematic APL therefore already existed in a three-week induction period including diagnostic assessment *(Tactic 7)*.

3. The format of competence statements in the Hairdressing Training Board (HTB) scheme facilitates the APL process *(Tactic 3)*.

4. APL development could be supported under a college/TEED funded project to develop NVQ approaches in Hairdressing *(Tactic 6)*.

5. The NVQ project worker had identified a potential market for employer-linked APL in two local salons *(Tactic 2)*.

What approach was adopted?

Two complementary strands of work involved:

i) Piloting APL on employers' premises

The feasibility of this sort of service was established by work with a small sample of employees in two salons (see 5 above). This indicated that competence claims could be substantiated by combining evidence from prior learning with that obtained from current assessments of performance and understanding. Unfortunately work ceased on the advice of the HTB who at that time had not developed a clear APL policy. They have since produced a policy statement (June 1991) and intend to pilot APL in a selection of centres from September 1991.

ii) Enhancing flexibility and access in a range of learner services

The Hairdressing section proposed the following refinements to existing arrangements:

- pre-entry guidance is now provided during a number of open days;
- systematic enquiry-logging and follow-up procedures have been established;
- publicity and marketing materials have been designed for particular customer groups;
- an interview checklist has been devised to standardise interview procedures;
- diagnostic assessment of core and vocational skills is used as the basis for action planning;
- individual learning programmes can be designed using flexible combinations of "clusters" of HTB units and supported by appropriate learning materials.

Problems

The main problems preventing the full development of flexibility and access are:

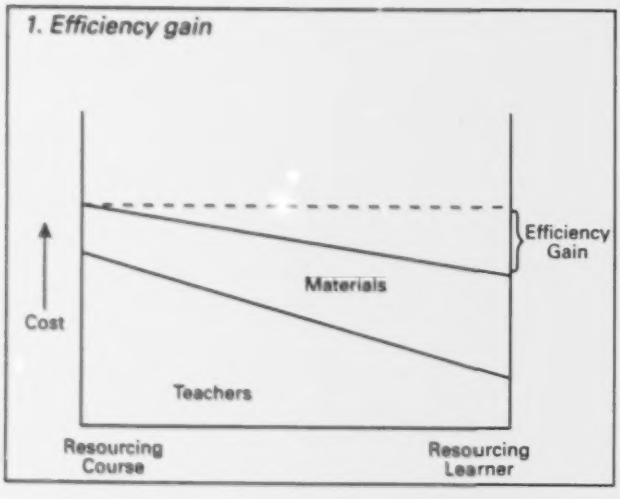
- insufficient flexibility in staffing, fees, enrolment procedures and MIS;
- insufficient workshops and specialist equipment.

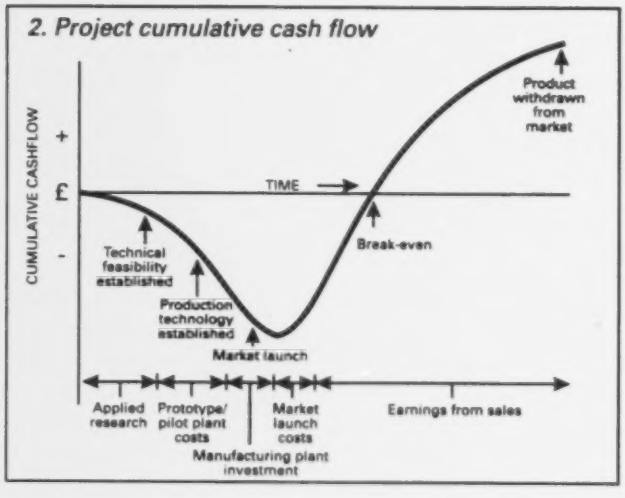
Future proposals

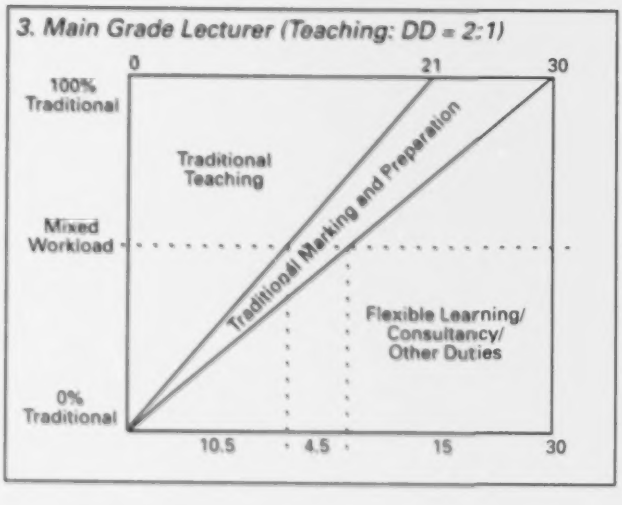
Proposals have been made to integrate the work of the pilot into mainstream curriculum practice. It was hoped that from September 1991 0.5 of a lecturer's time would be allocated to flexible assessment and learning services, including APL for fast-tracking to standard assessments. However, unless the resourcing issues referred to above are addressed, the delivery of more extensive guidance supported admissions services incorporating APL is unlikely.

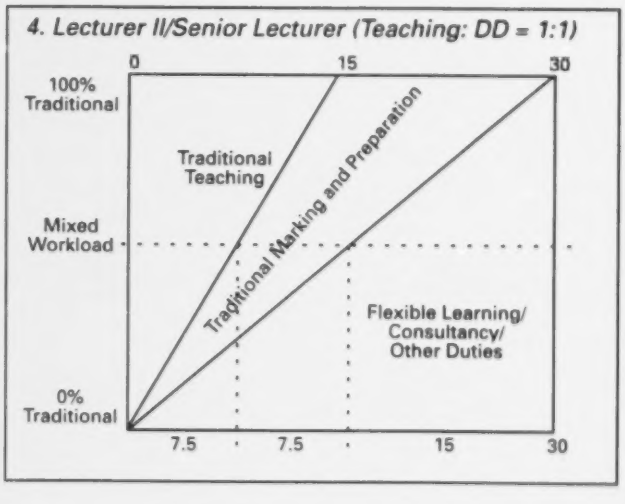
APPENDIX 1 APL AND 'EFFICIENCY GAIN'

The diagrams to illustrate the significant 'efficiency gain' when resources are applied through a learning centre.









Michael Field, Principal, Croydon College

APPENDIX 2 COLLEGE C AUDIT QUESTIONNAIRE

MAPPING OF INITIAL GUIDANCE AND ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this questionnaire is to discover the extent to which the college operates a coherent and efficient Admissions and Enrolment system. Your help in completing this questionnaire will be appreciated and the results will help Heads of Department and the college management make decisions about improving next year's Admissions and Enrolment system.

Various course teams in the college have developed ideas about how we might develop our Admissions and Enrolment system. These course teams have often been involved in development work around pre-entry guidance, the accreditation of prior learning and achievement, induction, portfolio preparation and so on. It is possible to put all these ideas together to produce a single approach which can be called *Guidance Supported Admissions*.

The Guidance Supported Admissions process is built around guidance, assessment and accreditation. Guidance may take place 'pre-entry' or 'on entry' — in this sense it culminates, and may overlap with, induction to the learning programme. Assessment may take place for diagnostic or accreditation purposes. Individuals may be offered diagnostic assessment for a variety of purposes — including the identification of specific learning needs and/or the individual's aptitude for a particular learning programme/qualification. In some cases this assessment can result in exemptions for the individual from part of the learning programme (although not the assessment). For instance, it may be possible for a student to be exempted from the learning for a module or unit of the programme and go straight to the assessment. Accreditation may take place 'on entry' as a result of successfully assessing prior experiences or learning (this is known as accrediting prior learning). This accreditation will usually depend on the individual providing valid and reliable evidence of their achievements. This may be done through portfolio preparation and presentation. Although we can talk of the different parts of this process, from the learner's point of view they are part of a *guidance supported admissions process which includes assessment and the possibility of the accreditation of prior learning.*

Obviously, the kind of curriculum process adopted will inform the kind of administrative and financial processes necessary.

COURSE/QUALIFICATION/LEVEL
INITIAL GUIDANCE AND ASSESSMENT

PRE-ENTRY GUIDANCE (PEG)

1. Please describe any 'marketing' that is done for your course/qualification in order to ensure that what is offered reflects a local (or regional) demand.

2. Briefly indicate the target groups for the qualification. (e.g. unemployed, employers, 16–18 year olds, etc.)

3. Attach copies of any course information leaflets/publicity material aimed at the target groups.

4. What pre-entry events are organised for the course/qualification? (e.g. open days, taster programmes, etc.)

5. How are enquiries dealt with?

   Who deals with enquiries?

   How are enquiries logged?

   Under what circumstances are enquirers referred to other members of the college staff? It would be helpful to list who these might be.

6. Do interviews (either formally or informally) take place before enrolment?

YES NO

What is the purpose of the interview?

Why do they take place?

Who interviews?

When do interviews take place?

Where do they take place?

What happens at the interview? (It would be useful to attach any materials, forms, tests, etc. that are used during the interview.)

7. What is the range of destinations for the individual following the interview in addition to enrolment on the programme/course?
8. Do you have any plans to modify your current Pre-Entry Guidance arrangements?

YES NO

Would you appreciate support from the college to help you develop your plans or formalise any ideas you have?

YES NO

If YES, please indicate what sort of support you would find most useful:

INDUCTION

1. Please indicate the 'content' of your induction procedures and how they cover what learners need to know on starting the course/programme. If possible, attach a copy of your Induction Programme.

CONTENT	YES	NO	HOW
course/programme organisation (who, when, etc.)			
information about VQs, progression, etc.			
teaching/learning methods			
assessment arrangements			
guidance/support available			
other (please specify)			

If you cannot supply a copy of your programme outline, please describe it, briefly, below:

2. Do you have any plans to modify your current induction arrangements?

YES NO

Would you appreciate support from the college to help you develop your plans or formalise any ideas you have?

YES NO

If YES, please indicate what sort of support you would find most useful:

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

1. Please indicate how you assess individual learners before they start their formal course/programme. Complete the table below stating the methods/styles of assessment used to identify existing competencies, knowledge, skills and/or needs. Please be specific by referring to examples where possible (e.g. formal/ informal interviews, performance related and/or written tests, etc.).

EXISTING COMPETENCIES/SKILLS/ KNOWLEDGE/NEEDS RELATED TO:	ASSESSMENT METHOD/STYLE
subject-specific skills	
subject-specific knowledge	
vocational competence	
vocational knowledge	
core skills (communication/ numeracy/etc.)	
study skills	
language	
other (please specify)	

2. How do you record the results of initial assessment? Please describe any system for each of the categories above.

3. Please explain, briefly, how you use the results of initial assessment:
   a. to produce individual/group action plans;
   b. to design individual/learning experiences;
   c. to provide education/careers guidance;
   d. to cater for individual needs within group teaching;
   e. to organise learning support (e.g. related to language, communications, etc.).

4. What are the examining board guidelines on initial assessment and the accreditation of prior learning and/ or experience and achievement for the programme/qualification?

5. Do you offer, or plan to offer, formal systematic assessment of prior learning (APL) for any of the following purposes as part of initial assessment practice:

ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING	CURRENTLY		PLANNED	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
for careers, educational guidance				
for access				
for exemptions from parts or modules of a course				
for credit towards NVQs or VQs				
other (please specify)				

6. Are you planning any changes (including any mentioned above) to your initial assessment procedures?

YES NO

Would you appreciate support from the college to help you develop your plans or formalise any ideas you may have about improvements or modifications?

YES NO

If YES, please indicate what sort of support you would find useful:

FLEXIBILITY

1. Does the course referred to in the previous questions involve any flexible/open learning arrangements? For example: open learning packages; self-supported study; drop-in workshops; credit accumulation systems; modularisation, etc.

YES NO

If YES, please specify:

2. Do you have plans to increase the flexibility of learning and/or assessment?

YES NO

If YES, please specify:

ANYTHING ELSE?

Is there anything you would like to suggest to those responsible for developing the college's admissions, induction and initial assessment systems?

EVALUATION SEMINARS

BACKGROUND BRIEFING 1: DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF APL

APL — the assessment of prior learning — and its associated services for students, is a process which is offered when an individual first engages with the college. The process spans the period between an individual deciding to obtain some learning and/or a qualification and the beginning of a formal learning programme or course for that individual. Consequently, the process of APL can be considered as the most important part of a student-centred admissions system: one which is student centred and offers the student information, support, guidance and assessment throughout the process.

This 'guidance-supported admissions' system will offer the student a 'package' made up of:

- Information
  - about his/her self;
  - about the learning and assessment environment (the college);
  - about learning and assessment opportunities;
  - about progression opportunities following enrolment and admission.
- Guidance (be it personal, educational, vocational or career)
  - pre-entry (i.e. before admission and enrolment);
  - at entry (i.e. at admission and enrolment and including aspects of orientation);
  - immediately post-entry (i.e. induction and the negotiation of a personal (or individual) learning programme.).
- Assessment
  - for access purposes;
  - for diagnostic purposes;
  - for accreditation purposes.

(Note: This definition of APL and student services broadens APL from a narrow service restricted to those students capable of obtaining full accreditation of competence for NVQs to an 'entitlement for all students'.)

APL may be carried out, or offered, for the following purposes:

- **learner self-assessment purposes;**
- **access and progression purposes (including careers guidance);**
- **exemption purposes (i.e. to exempt the individual from parts of a course or programme);**
- **accreditation purposes (i.e. to credit the individual with units of parts of a qualification on entry).**

BACKGROUND BRIEFING 2: PURPOSE OF EVALUATION SEMINARS

The purposes of the Evaluation Seminars are:

a) to evaluate the responsiveness of the college to new systems of APL and student services;

b) to evaluate the extent of the development of new systems of APL and student services in the National Curriculum Council (NCC) over the last eighteen months;

c) to evaluate the extent to which strategies exist, or could exist, for the further development of new systems of APL and student services in NCC.

Three seminars have been arranged:
- two are for course teams;
- one is for department managers.

The document titled *An Evaluation Framework* has been designed for use by all three seminars. However, course teams may wish to concentrate rather more on the section dealing with 'enhancing learner-centred services' and the departmental managers may wish to concentrate rather more on the section dealing with strategic development plans.

Two checklists are included in the documentation:

— Checklist A provides a breakdown of the kind of activities which might make up an APL and student services process;

— Checklist B provides a listing of some of the key institutional and management issues in developing an APL and student services process.

All three seminars will be 'written up' and the reports of each circulated to all participating staff for comments. These reports will then be combined into a single document which will be presented to the FEU/Learning from Experience Trust Project on APL and student services. The Project will receive similar reports from other colleges and will use all the college reports in the production of a single report on the development of APL and student services in FE colleges.

AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The following framework is suggested as a means of focusing discussions:

1. CLIENT GROUPS

For which of the following client groups are APL and student services most suitable?
Can you provide any evidence to support your answer?

Clients who:

- want assessment/recognition of prior learning and achievement:
  a. to gain exemption from units/modules of learning programmes;
  b. to gain access to courses or programmes.
- want assessment of prior learning achievements for possible credit towards NVQs:
  a. accreditation only;
  b. accreditation and further units/modules of learning programmes.
- want learning or training programmes to meet current and or anticipated work demands (recruited via employers, etc.):
  a. credit for existing competences (if possible);
  b. planned programmes to meet identified learning/training needs.
- want to get appropriate qualifications or on right course or programme:
  a. unsure of direction;
  b. sure of direction but unsure of potential.

2. ENHANCING LEARNER-CENTRED SERVICES

What developments have been made related to any/all of the following?

a. access to (flexible) learning services/programmes;
b. centralised/co-ordinated admissions services;
c. learner support;
d. flexible enrolment and fee structures.

Refer to checklist A if you find it useful

3. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS

What strategies has the college adopted to implement plans in relation to:

a. institutional development;
b. staff development;
c. curriculum development;
d. partnerships and marketing.

Refer to checklist B for examples within the above categories

4. FUTURE PLANS

Do future plans exist? Are they concerned with:

a. continuing existing development?
b. addressing specific problems/issues uncovered by work carried out so far?
c. refining and/or co-ordinating existing models within more flexible arrangements?

5. SUPPORT FOR FUTURE PLANS

What sort of external support (excluding larger budgets) would most help the college develop plans concerning APL and student services?

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (2)

The following framework is suggested to help each institution to:

— conduct an independent evaluation of work limited to the Project
— contribute to a joint shared evaluation meeting arranged for May 23rd in the Trust 11.00–15.00, with a buffet lunch.

Please use the framework to structure your written evaluation and the additional checklists provided if you find them useful.

1. ACTION PLANS

What were your original action plans related to APL/A:

— within a range of learner-centred admissions arrangements and/or
— for access, exemption or accreditation in relation to particular courses or qualifications.

Refer as appropriate to:

— their context (corporate development plans time scales)
— any modification made with explanations.

2. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS

What strategies has the College adopted to implement its action plans by supporting any/all of the following:

1) institutional development
2) staff development
3) curriculum development
4) partnerships and marketing

Refer to checklist B for examples within the above categories.

3. PROBLEMS, TACTICS AND ISSUES

What problems have you encountered in adopting any of the strategies listed in 2 above:

Comment as appropriate on:

— the effectiveness of the strategies;
— tactics used to try to solve problems identified;
— issues raised.

4. DELIVERING APL/A

What models of APL/A or flexible assessment services:

(1) were available 12—18 months ago?
(2) are currently available centrally and/or in relation to particular qualifications or courses?
(3) are due to be operational within the next 12 months?

Summarise funding, staffing and costing arrangements for any of the models mentioned in 2, 3 above.

5. PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

What problems and issues specifically related to delivery have been identified?

6. ENHANCING LEARNER-CENTRED SERVICES

What developments have been made over the last 12—18 months related to any/all of the following:

— access to flexible learning services/programmes?
— centralised/co-ordinated admission services?
— learner support?
— flexible enrolment and fee structures.

Refer to checklist A if you find it useful.

7. FUTURE ACTION/IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

What are your medium/long-term plans to:

— continue strategic development work mentioned in 2 above.
— address problems and issues raised in 3 above.
— refine and/or co-ordinate existing models of APL/A within flexible assessment arrangements (see 4 above).
— further enhance related learner-centred services (see 6 above).

8. SUPPORT FOR FUTURE PLANS

What sort of external support (excluding larger budgets) would most help the College implement its future action plans.

A PREREQUISITE APL/A SERVICES

1. APL/APLA

Central (initial) assessment linked with appropriate dispersed provision.

Central (initial) assessment within admission arrangements		**Dispersed (specific) assessment** for access, exemption or accreditation
— information — guidance/learning support — informal diagnosis	leading to	formal diagnostic assessment (core/vocational skills)
careers educational guidance APL/A guided self assessment initial stages of portfolio preparation	leading to	APL/A specific to course/qualifications — final stages of portfolio preparation — assessment of evidence from range of sources — arrangements for certification

2. Access to flexible assessment and accreditation arrangements

competence based
workbased
assessment by appointment/college/current assessments of performance and knowledge
unit based assessment and accreditation
credit accumulation and transfer arrangements

3. Guidance

pre-entry	:	action planning
on entry	:	target setting
during learning programme	:	tutorial support, review/records of progress, etc.
on exit	:	guidance about further learning, employment etc.

4. Access to flexible/modular learning opportunities

mixed mode — course, module, open/distance learning
workplace learning — links with college based
modular/unit based
workshops
resource centres

5. Appropriate/flexible enrolment, registration and fee structures

phased fees: charges per unit/hour/for services
tracking systems

CHECKLIST A

For APL and student services, what are:

- marketing arrangements
- access arrangements
  e.g. what are entry requirements?
  what are age requirements?
  how is access to qualification enhanced?
- Pre-entry arrangements
  e.g. are there open days, etc?
- Systems for dealing with enquiries
  e.g. are they logged?
  how are enquiries dealt with?
  how are enquirers referred? on and to whom?
- Interview arrangements (prior to or immediately post enrolment)
  e.g. do they take place for what purpose?
  when do they take place?
  how are they used?
- Induction arrangements
  e.g. does induction take place and for what purposes?
- Initial assessment arrangements
  e.g. does diagnostic assessment take place?
  how are results recorded?
  how are results used?
- Guidance arrangements
  e.g. what forms of guidance are offered?
  for what purposes?
  how does guidance influence the student's learning and assessment programme?
- Flexible learning arrangements
  e.g. how flexible is the programme?
  is individual learning possible?
  how is individual learning managed?
- Accreditation arrangements
  e.g. is unit accreditation possible?
  is accreditation of prior learning possible?
- Are there plans to change any of the above arrangements in the near future?
- What do the awarding body guidelines on APL say?

CHECKLIST B

Institutional development

- Resource Management for APL and student services
  - e.g. costing
    pricing
    fees
    accommodation
    equipment and materials
- Staffing structures and arrangements
  - e.g. timetables
    case loading
    departmental responsibility
    RCC
    Administration staff
- Enrolment systems and procedures
  - e.g. application/interview arrangements
    programme beginnings/ends
    recording systems
    administration
    MIS
- Departmental planning

Staff development

- Needs analysis
- Responsibilities
- Events/briefings, etc.
- Role development (advisor; counsellor; assessors, etc.)

Curriculum development

- Modularisation of programmes/qualifications
- Credit accumulation systems
- Individual learning programmes
- Specialist materials
- APL documentation

Partnerships and marketing

- Marketing
  - e.g. to individuals
    to employers
    to voluntary sector
- Partnerships/collaborations
  - e.g. LEA
    TEC
- Consultancy/full cost recovery
  - e.g. employer-based services.

B STRATEGIC PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT AREAS

1. **Institutional development:**

   management development;
   managing change, resources, assessment learning and APL/A services;
   staffing structures in place or needed to implement change e.g. process roles, change agents;
   strategic planning resourcing of 2, 3 and 4 below.

   Resourcing

   flexible, service/achievement-led models;
   costing pricing fees (training credits);
   staffing implications, timetables geared to provision of services;
   accommodation/buildings;
   flexible MIS.

   Finance, administration, and communication systems

   phased enrolment procedures, fees (unit, service, hour);
   tracking systems (linking central and dispersed assessment);
   communication and record keeping.

2. **Staff development**

   how to deliver coherent, cost effective, cumulative, adequate lead in time, targeted, accredited programmes;

   supporting administrative and academic staff;

   developing APLA teams jointly responsible for service but with specialist individual responsibilities as advisers, assessors, co-ordinators, programme designers.

3. **Curriculum development**

   reorganisation or modification of courses into competence/unit/modular based learning programmes;

   designing negotiated individual learning programmes;

   stating entry requirements and course objectives in competence terms;

   designing assessment materials and methods suitable for APLA and on-course candidates;

   planning and producing documentation to delivering APLA (see matrix).

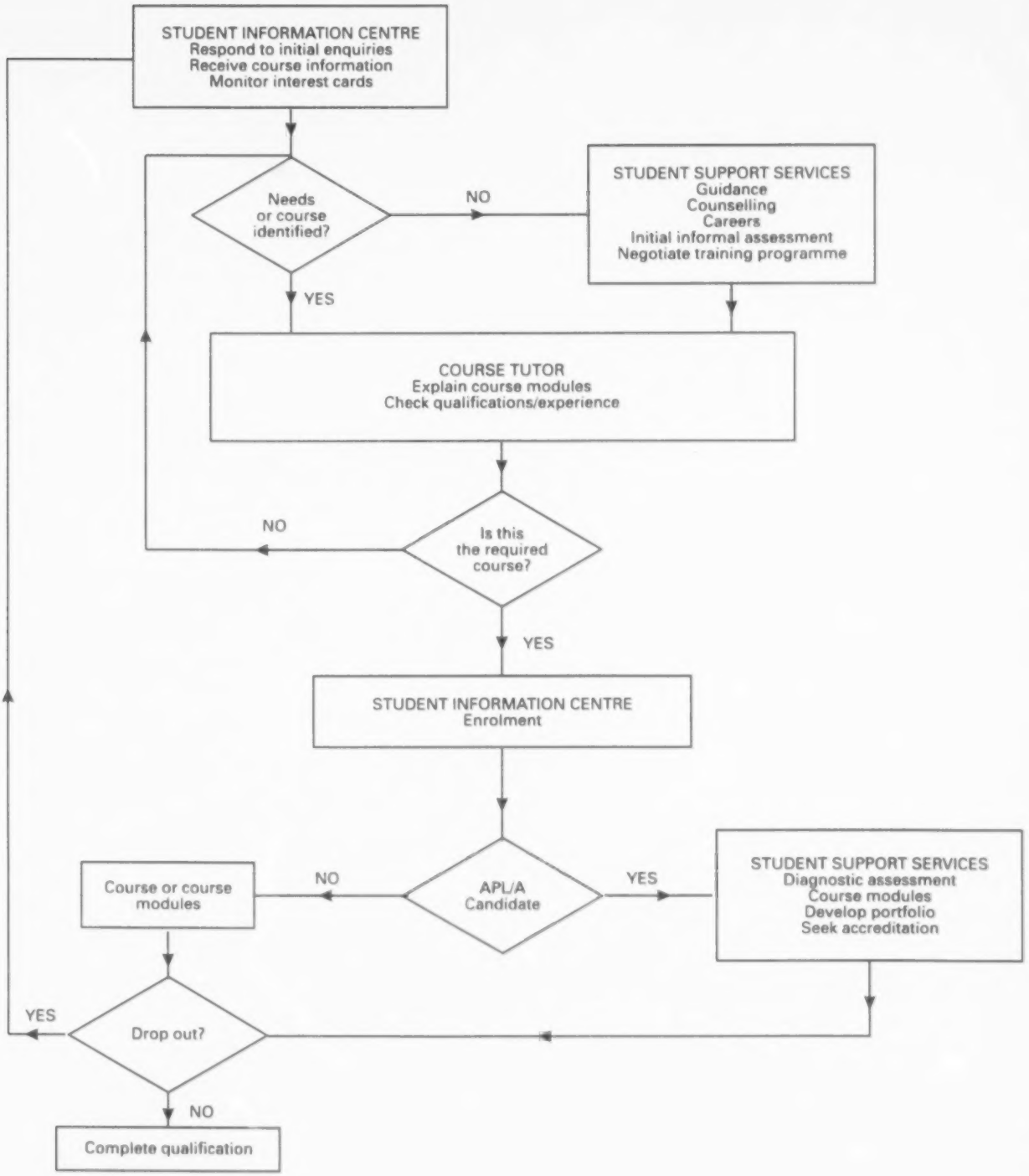
4. **Partnerships and marketing strategies**

   marketing APL/A to individuals and employers;

   collaboration between LEA, college, ATC (Accredited Training Centre), RCB (Regional Curriculum Bases), LENs (Local Employer Networks), TECs;

   employer links for delivery of learning, qualifications, workbased assessment.

APPENDIX 4 COLLEGE B: STUDENT INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES



APPENDIX 5 STAGES IN THE APLA PROCESS

STAGE	TUTOR ACTIVITY	CANDIDATE ACTIVITY	DOCUMENTATION
RECRUITMENT	Marketing Sends out further information	Makes initial contact with centre/college Applies to centre/college	Publicity leaflets APL information booklet APL application form
RECOGNISING RELEVANT EXPERIENCE	Guidance/counselling Interview 1* Initial screening	Self Assessment Reflects on experience, goals etc. to establish feasibility of APL process If appropriate, candidate given APL claim form, Self Assessment Guidelines	Based on completed APL application form APL claim form Self-Assessment Guidelines (based on MCI Self-Assessment book)
MAPPING RELEVANT ACHIEVEMENTS	Interview 2* (or Workshop) Initial matching of claimed achievements to unit specifications (elements/PC or objectives) Provides guidance for the above 2 or 3 examples; face-to-face contact Guidance offered by phone if necessary, sorts out self-help arrangements with other candidates Enrols candidate in college	Identifies and records achievements which correspond to unit specifications Completes for 2 or 3 examples Finishes APL claim form in own time	APL claim form College enrolment form
MATCHING COMPETENCES CLAIMED TO POSSIBLE EVIDENCE FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES	Interview 3* Records evidence available from outside sources to support competence claims Explains about other assessments needed as appropriate Signs assessment contract Registers candidate with awarding body	Presents completed APL claim form (units/elements claimed) referring to type of evidence available from outside sources Discusses and records specific nature and amount of evidence available from outside/other assessments needed as appropriate	Completed APL claim form indicating type of evidence available Assessment contract Awarding body registration document(s)

* Interviews 1 and 2: General counselling/guidance
* Interview 3: Specific assessment related guidance

STAGE	TUTOR ACTIVITY	CANDIDATE ACTIVITY	DOCUMENTATION
ASSEMBLING EVIDENCE (portfolio preparation) i) from outside sources	Assessment: Guidance on portfolio presentation Advises candidate about: — suitable evidence from outside sources — other (contemporary) assessments needed	Candidates meet to discuss: — possible sources of evidence from outside — other assessments needed (contemporary) Presents portfolio of evidence from outside sources	Portfolio Preparation Guidelines
ii) from other contemporary assessments)	Assesses evidence from outside sources Starts unit record of evidence		Unit record of evidence
	Discusses/arranges/carries out other assessments to verify competence claims e.g. oral questions work based assessment simulations written assignments other	Agrees and undertakes other assessments	
TOP-UP LEARNING	Arranges top up learning as appropriate to complete unit claims (plus related assessments)	Undertakes top-up learning and related assessment as appropriate	
	Completes unit record of evidence	All evidence in portfolio organised to correlate with unit record of evidence categories	
	Arranges verification and moderation with awarding body		
OUTCOMES i) Accreditation		Receives unit credits	
ii) Further assessment	Arranges further assessments (see above)	Undertakes further assessments	
iii) Further learning	Guidance on how to achieve credit for further units/full award, e.g. open learning	Undertakes further learning	
	Open learning work-based learning, self study, college-based units		

STAGES IN APL PROCESS — COLLEGE C SEPTEMBER 1990

STAGE 1: INFORMATION AND RECRUITMENT

Activities: service is publicised;
candidates make initial contact with college.

Resources: publicity/information leaflets;
charging system;
resource allocation.

STAGE 2: PRE-ENTRY GUIDANCE

Activities: initial pre-entry guidance interview to establish candidates:
- strengths/weaknesses
- goals/objectives
- experiences/achievements
- needs/wants;

second PEG interview to match claimed achievements to unit specifications;
agree specific purpose of APL process.

Resources: qualification expressed as elements and performance criteria;
guidelines on acceptable experience/achievement.

STAGE 3: ENROLMENT AND FORMAL ADMISSION TO COLLEGE

STAGE 4: PORTFOLIO PREPARATION

Activities: evidence from outside collected, collated and recorded;
candidate registered with Awarding Body (if appropriate);
'gaps' in prior achievement/experience identified;
guidance offered to candidate on evidence/progression.

Resources: awarding body guidelines and registration forms;
recording forms; guidances on portfolio preparation.

STAGE 5: ASSESSMENT

Activities: portfolio assessed;
contemporary assessment carried out.

STAGE 6: LEARNING

Activities: top up or individual learning plan negotiated;
guidance on access/progression.

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FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

Objectives

The objects for which the **Further Education Unit (FEU)** is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:

a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;

b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvement can be effected;

c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of, further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;

d) to disseminate and publish information, and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information, about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

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